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THE PIONEER SERIES, No. 10.

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RAIKES
THE
PIONEER

FOUNDER OF SUNDAY SCHOOLS

BY

ERNEST H. HAYES

Author of
"THE CONCISE GUIDES," "THE CHILD IN THE MIDST,"
ETC., ETC.

FOREWORD BY E. G. BRAHAM, M.A., B.D.

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LONDON:
"TEACHERS AND TAUGHT" OFFICE,
4, FLEET LANE, E.C. 4

First published, February 1930

Made and Printed in Great Britain by
Alexander & Shepheard (Wyman & Sons, Ltd.), Rolls Buildings,
Fetter Lane, London, E.C.4.

FOREWORD

THE Sunday school world in particular, and, we hope, many both inside and outside our Churches, will do well to read and re-read this excellent volume on the life of Robert Raikes. Mr. Ernest H. Hayes, the author, has already made his reputation in the Sunday schools of the world by his *Concise Guides*, etc.

He has wisely not confined his attention merely to the biographical details of the life of Robert Raikes, but has shown that the Sunday schools of this country are still vital to the spiritual needs of children and adolescents, and, more than that, they are the absolute requisite to the future well-being of the Church and Nation. The Churches throughout the land will have to centre their interest more and more on the Sunday schools. In pleading for teachers of the highest type, those who are prepared by self-improvement to make their work more efficient, Mr. Hayes has struck at one of our root problems. We cannot, except at our infinite peril, neglect the education of teachers as well as scholars.

I can most heartily commend this excellent volume to all Sunday school teachers and officials throughout the land. Read it again and again; it will do you good.

ERNEST G. BRAHAM
(*Gen. Sec., National S. S. Union*).

TO

CAREY BONNER

Lover of Little Children,
Disciple of Robert Raikes,
Leader of the Sunday School
Movement for Thirty Years, and
Most Kindly and Encouraging
of Colleagues,
this book is gratefully
DEDICATED

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

ON the Thames Embankment in London, not far from the Raikes' statue, stands the bronze figure of the British Queen, Boadicea, driving her chariot against the Roman legions. On the pedestal appears this inscription :

> 'Regions Cæsar never knew,
> Thy posterity shall sway.'

In the same way it might be said that triumphs Robert Raikes never dreamed of have been won by the movement he started one hundred and fifty years ago. Equally true is it that his followers to-day have problems to grapple with that he never knew. Yet it will be seen in the following pages that no religious or social problem has emerged since Raikes made his experiment, that cannot, under God, be solved by his Sunday school plan.

The purpose of this book is therefore not merely to present a faithful portrait of the man who founded the Sunday School movement, and show what has grown out of his work, but to suggest ways of perfecting his plan. This task, however, cannot be achieved to-day without a clear understanding of the origin and development of Sunday schools. The book has accord-

ingly been planned to present a straightforward and consecutive story of the early days of the movement, and how it developed out of the statesmanlike plan of its founder. To make this as graphic as possible, I have of set purpose quoted the actual words of Raikes himself, in his letters and newspaper articles, as fully as the plan of the book and its rigid limits permitted.

Had it not been for the extensive researches of Josiah Harris in Gloucester in 1862-3, little would have been known to-day of the real man behind the origin of the movement. Harris made his inquiries on the spot, and put on record the actual reminiscences of the few old people then living who had been among the first generation of Sunday scholars; and until his son, J. Henry Harris, wrote 'Robert Raikes, the Man and His Work,' in 1899, the idea was current that practically nothing was known about Raikes the man. It follows, therefore, that anyone who desires to present the life and character of the pioneer is deeply indebted to both Josiah Harris and his son. That debt is hereby gratefully acknowledged.

A number of other authorities have been consulted in preparing this book, but for the above reason none have proved so trustworthy and detailed as the Harrises.

I beg to make very cordial acknowledgment of the great help I have received in my task from my friend Carey Bonner, who is, without question, the greatest living authority on both the Sunday School movement and its founder.

Author's Preface

Mr. Bonner has read and re-read my manuscript, and has given me the benefit of his valuable suggestions on many points, in addition to much encouragement. I also desire to express my appreciation of the co-operation of Ernest G. Braham, who has kindly contributed a 'Foreword,' and of James R. Ogden, Esq., J.P., the National President, in tracing authorities on the subject.

I would most earnestly commend to the attention of my readers the closing chapter of the book; for my object is not only to praise Robert Raikes, but do something to carry forward the work he started, to greater triumphs than he could have foreseen.

ERNEST H. HAYES.

'Chetwynd,'
Wallington.
January 30*th*, 1930.

ROBERT RAIKES

No mail-clad knight, or letter'd sage,
No peerless wonder of his age ;
Plain yeoman in a country town,
Good, pure and kind, his sole renown—
Save that some marked his visage mild
Grow radiant when he met a child !

A Child to him was treasure trove,
A waif, a stray, from heaven above ;
A coin defaced, no image true,
But waiting to be stamped anew ;
A precious wreck from stormy seas,
A promise of infinities !

" Gather the children " was his cry ;
" Gather, and mould, and mend ! O, why
Give up to sloth and vice and crime
The fairest product of the time ?
Enough that men should prove defiled,
But save the infant, save the child !

" Copy the Master ! catch the fire !
Let His own Love your souls inspire ;
On His own day the wanderers bring
To learn the praises of their King ;
And found in furtherance of His rule,
That blessèd thing—a Sunday School."

He spoke ; the Master heard and blessed !
From north to south, from east to west,
The message runs ; and lo ! it wakes
The Church to learn of Robert Raikes :
And coronets and crowns grow dim—
Grand yeoman ! when we think of him.

Francis Tucker, in 'Day Dawn' (Carey Bonner's Cantata).

RAIKES THE PIONEER

Chapter One — THE VISITOR OF GLOUCESTER GAOLS

'THERE go Buck Reekes* and Jimmy Wood to the early service at the cathedral,' said one Gloucester citizen to another, as they watched an ill-assorted pair pick their way through the filth and garbage of the street.

'I often wonder why Jimmy Wood, the miser, attends the early service at all,' the other citizen would reply, 'for he is a hard nut, he is. And you wouldn't catch him giving pennies away,' he added.

This last remark was called forth by the fact that Robert Raikes had just paused to pat a small boy on the head.

'You are a nice little boy,' Raikes was heard to say, and he followed up this greeting by giving him a penny.

The boy, who belonged to the educated classes, went on his way to the Grammar School whistling merrily, and Raikes soon overtook his companion. As they made their way to the Lady Chapel of the Cathedral, they were a study in contrasts. As boys they had attended the Grammar School together—for Raikes, who

* In the old Gloucester dialect 'a' was pronounced as 'e.'

was born on September 14th, 1735, had been educated by his father to succeed him as proprietor of the *Gloucester Journal.*

Jimmy Wood, as he was called, was a short, spare, alert little man, with a quick step, neatly dressed in rusty black, a plain but refined figure. He combined the business of banker and haberdasher, and at his shop in the main street he would sell you a farthingsworth of pins at one counter, or shovel out gold to any amount on the opposite side. The fact that he never spent a penny more on himself than he could help, and would never give a farthing to anyone else, had earned for him the name of miser.

'You're a queer fellow, Robert,' commented Jimmy Wood to his old school-friend, as they resumed their walk. 'Why you give pennies to strange boys, and waste your time at the prison, baffles me completely. What do you get out of it? So far from helping you or the *Journal*, people only scoff and say you're mad.'

Raikes turned to his friend with a deprecating smile. 'It behoves us all to take some part in helping our unfortunate fellow-beings in distress or disgrace,' he said.

'Fiddlesticks!' said the miser shortly. 'People in prison deserve all they get. If they die there, the country is well rid of 'em.'

At this point the two men reached the cathedral door, and the conversation had perforce to cease. It must be confessed that if Raikes's view about helping others commends itself to most people to-day, the contemptuous and

selfish attitude of the miserly banker was almost universal at that period.

Quite unconsciously Jimmy Wood acted as a foil to his old friend, Robert Raikes, for they were the exact opposite in almost every respect. Raikes the printer, as he was usually called, was above medium height, and comfortably stout. Not only was he portly and of good presence, but he carried himself with style, if not swagger. Moreover, he dressed in an expensive and stylish way, according to the showy manner of the period.

Ordinarily he wore a dark blue or a claret-coloured coat, and a white or fancy waistcoat with silver buttons and cambric frill and cuffs. His knee-breeches were of nankeen in summer and cloth in winter, and below them he wore white stockings, and shoes ornamented with silver buckles. His large and well-formed features were framed by a big brown wig, with a double row of curls. He wore a three-cornered turned-up civilian's hat, which when necessary could be carried under his arm. As he invariably carried a silver-mounted cane, and 'took snuff with elegance,' he was known in some circles as 'Buck' Raikes, and dubbed a dandy. His stylish gait and elaborate dress made him a conspicuous figure in any company.

People who envied his business success, or were shamed by his benevolence and public spirit, said he was vain, and even accused him of being a humbug. Be that as it may, it is clear that Raikes had a passion for cleanliness and neatness, took pride in his personal

appearance, and at the same time was a big-hearted man, fired with a great zeal for the uplift of his fellows.

No one knew why Jimmy Wood attended the early services at the Cathedral, because he made no pretence of being a religious man; but it was quite different with Robert Raikes, who was a regular worshipper at St. Mary de Crypt, his parish church. Raikes was not only a printer of fine books with big type and wide margins, and did the jobbing printing for the tradesmen of Gloucester—he was also the proprietor, editor and publisher of the *Gloucester Journal*, one of the few provincial weeklies then in existence.

After attendance at the cathedral service that morning, Raikes bent his steps to Southgate Street, and was soon deeply engaged in the affairs of his business. He took his work as editor of the county journal both seriously and conscientiously. In those days, of course, newspapers were nothing more than a four-page sheet of foolscap paper, and there was little room for editorial comment, while the power of the press was as limited as its freedom. Yet the moral tone and influence of the *Gloucester Journal* was far above the average. An examination of its files during Robert Raikes's time reveals that the paper, while upholding the authority of the State and the Church in all things, was the champion of the underdogs of that day—and there were many.

The *Journal* had been established by Robert Raikes, senior, in 1722. On two occasions in

the early history of the paper the elder Raikes was arraigned before the Bar of the House of Commons for daring to report certain Parliamentary proceedings. In the thirty-five years during which the founder controlled the paper, he had been ever ready to uphold good causes and combat the forces of reaction and evil. In particular, he had interested himself in the felons and debtors in the Gloucester prisons.

On the death of his father in 1757, the second Robert Raikes had inherited a newspaper property with a worthy tradition to maintain. The new printer of the *Journal* (he never called himself editor) soon proved himself not only a capable business man, but also a serious-minded public servant. Such influence as the newspaper possessed was exerted more than ever on behalf of the despised, neglected, and down-trodden masses, whose condition at that time was deplorable to the last degree.

'I hope that will move someone to pity,' said Raikes to himself that morning as he put down his pen. He had been writing a paragraph for the next issue of the *Journal*, and peeping over his shoulder we read:

'The prisoners confined in the castle, without allowance and without the means of subsistence by labour, most humbly entreat some little assistance from those who can pity their wretchedness. The favours they have heretofore received will ever be remembered with gratitude.'

As soon as matters of business had been satisfactorily disposed of, Raikes left his office in

Southgate Street, and picked his way delicately through the dirty streets to the castle. In his work as editor and reporter of the *Journal*, he came into close contact with the magistrates' court and the Gloucester prisons, with far-reaching effects. On several days in the week he found time to visit one or both of the prisons to do what he could to help necessitous cases. The overcrowding, the stench, the filth, and the risk of contagion combined to make these prison visits a daily penance to the printer with the stylish air.

Both the county and city prison were located in the old castle, and they became the school in which Raikes learned the art of philanthropic and Christian service. The Gloucester Bridewell, or House of Correction, adjoined the county gaol. Such were the conditions obtaining in the Bridewell that the debtors, vagrants, and shrews detained there, together with accused people awaiting trial, were soon made as bad as the criminals awaiting hanging or transportation, with whom they were forced to mix.

As we have seen, Raikes's pity was stirred by the starving and destitute condition of the debtors, and he generously fed and clothed them as far as his time and means allowed. More than that, his righteous indignation was stirred by the iniquitous system that incarcerated men for debt, but allowed them no means of subsistence, apart from any pittance they might earn under such conditions. ' Men, women, and even children put under arrest for minor offences and small debts, were herded together with criminals

of the deepest dye, and many of them were left there naked, starving and rotting in a truly shocking state.'

Thus Raikes drew attention in his *Journal* to the fact that, while the state provided bread and water for the criminal, it left the prisoner awaiting trial, and the person incarcerated for debt, to be fed by charity or starve. He not only made regular appeals for food and clothing, but published the thanks of the prisoners for the help they received through the paper. A few extracts from the *Journal* are worth quotation here, for the light they throw upon the situation and Raikes's part in it.

'There are now in our castle fourteen or fifteen persons confined for small debts of £10 or £11. These poor men are in such distress that they are near perishing for want of sustenance. About a fortnight ago *one unfortunate man, they say, was starved to death there.* Who in the possession of the good things of this world can refuse a small share to alleviate such a state of wretchedness ?'

'The debtors return their sincere thanks to the High Sheriff of the county for his kind donation of one guinea, and also to Abraham Isaac Elton, Esq. From him they likewise received one guinea yesterday, which was faithfully divided among real objects of charity. Some of these unhappy sufferers had little other support than the benefactions they received.'

'From private benefactions placed in his hands last winter for alleviating extreme distress in the county gaol, the printer has been enabled

to give an allowance of *two pennyworth of bread per day* to debtors who, not able to pay for a bed, are obliged to lay upon straw, and without such assistance must have perished for want. This charitable fund is almost exhausted.'

The following illuminating picture of the period has been preserved by another writer on prison conditions at Gloucester at this time.

'An old gentleman, nearly eighty, told me that he has heard his grandfather, a farmer, say that when he was a young man his wife always gave him, on market days, a basketful of eatables—black bread and cheese and broken bits—for the poor debtors confined at the Northgate, then standing and used as a debtors' prison. On market days the poor starving debtors cried from the top of the gate, from the roof or windows: "For God's sake, have pity on the poor debtors!" These poor miserable wretches dropped a basket down on the end of a cord, and benefactions were put in by the charitable. The gifts were acknowledged by pathetic and heartrending cries of gratitude!'

The truth is that the social system of that day was rotten to the core. Raikes knew it, and was not afraid to throw the searchlight of publicity upon the condition of the prisoners. Ignorant as dumb driven cattle, and for the most part unskilled, men who could get no work had to thieve or starve. Little wonder that crime was rampant everywhere, and the masses got more and more out of hand.

The situation called for drastic measures, but the only remedy that society fell back upon

was that of making punishment more severe. In other words, having by neglect bred criminals, society tried to relieve itself of responsibility by hanging them. Capital punishment was levied for quite trifling offences, and hangings were so common that they were hardly reported. Raikes did more than make news out of this deplorable state of affairs. He added comments from time to time that were intended to arouse public opinion. For instance, on one occasion after the assize had been held in Gloucester, the *Journal* reports :

'Heavy assize. Twenty-one condemned to death.' Raikes adds this comment: 'How deplorable that society cannot be secured without so great a sacrifice.'

Gradually the conviction was burnt in upon the soul of Robert Raikes that the reform of society was long overdue, and that he—failing others—must take the lead so far as his own county was concerned. There is no evidence to show that this conviction came to him as a sudden inspiration. On the contrary, he was a benevolent and altruistic-minded man of affairs, feeling his way along the hitherto unexplored road of applied Christianity. But a 'social gospel' was slowly forged on the anvil of his experience, and its three governing tenets were:

Vice is preventable ;
Idleness is the parent of vice ;
Ignorance is the cause of idleness ;

Raikes preached this gospel continuously, and practised it tirelessly for many years. Out of it was to grow the Sunday School movement, when

further experience had shown him the futility of trying to reform the adult.

Meanwhile, Buck Raikes, the dandy printer, who detested dirt and disorder, visited the prisons regularly, not only to alleviate suffering, but also to read to the prisoners. Like all pioneers he had to labour alone, for although generous folk helped him with gifts, no one appears to have shared his personal service, but regarded him as a crank, if not a dangerous fanatic. It was heartrending, tedious, and nauseous work, and Raikes must have been animated by the highest religious motives in it, although he was not the man to make a parade of his religion or wear his heart upon his sleeve. Referring on one occasion to the ministry of Jesus Christ to the needy when on earth, he comments :

'It is that part of our Saviour's character I try to imitate ; He went about doing good.'

Chapter Two

THE GUTTER-SNIPES OF GLOUCESTER

IN a little glassed-in office in the composing-room of the *Gloucester Journal*, sat the proprietor of the business, reading proofs. Suddenly the quiet of the little office was broken by loud cries and shouts, as through the open window came the clamour of children quarrelling and fighting in the street.

Putting aside his proofs, Raikes went to the window and surveyed the scene—not in anger, but with evident sorrow. His office looked on a narrow lane that was popular as a playground with the neglected children of the city. Too often, as in this case, play led to shouting and fighting, and to the uttering of such dreadful oaths and curses that respectable people stopped their ears with horror.

Raikes went back to his proof-reading with a heavy heart. One of the many problems that faced the city fathers of Gloucester was the presence of these street arabs, who ran wild for seven days a week, and who were so untameable that even the parish beadles dared not interfere with them.

Had this noise of children at play under his office window been no worse than such sounds as we know them to-day, it is doubtful whether it would have distressed Raikes very much, for

he was a family man, and a genial husband and father. It was the shocking depravity of the children that annoyed and distressed him.

From contemporary records it is clear that the neglected children of the poor were a nuisance to each other and an intolerable burden to grown-up people. For one thing, housing conditions were so bad, and the example of their parents so shocking, that the youngest children had little to learn of vice and wickedness, while their language seemed to be more or less confined to swearing and profanity. Raikes must have shared the opinion of the poet Cowper, that such young children could not have been so accomplished in swearing and obscenity unless they had been deliberately taught such things by evil-minded parents.

This shocking state of affairs was part of the harvest that society was reaping for its neglect of, and contempt for, the children of the poor. In a time when there was practically no middle class, the upper classes treated the masses as inferior beings of a lower order than themselves. This explains why the starving prisoners in the gaol and the quarrelsome children in the alleys were left severely alone, and regarded as one of the necessary evils of the time, to be kept in check by a more rigorous application of the law.

Again we find Raikes feeling his way towards a solution of a social problem. He disagreed entirely with his friends and contemporaries, who stoutly maintained that the masses, inarticulate and uneducated, were incapable of improvement. Perhaps his prison experiences

and first-hand contacts with the poor, had opened his eyes to the possibility of teaching them a better way of life.

By this time his prison visitations had developed a stage further. With his conviction that vice was the result of idleness caused by ignorance, Raikes tried to give instruction to the prisoners of Gloucester. When, as sometimes happened, a tradesman or person of any education was imprisoned for debt, Raikes employed the man to teach the other prisoners to read. Through the *Journal* he also secured help in getting employment for them on their release. But these efforts were often rendered fruitless, and the reformer disheartened, by a speedy return of the recipients to the prison for a new debt or a fresh crime. Gradually it was borne in upon Raikes's mind that efforts to teach and reform the adult were mostly a waste of labour and time. Evil habits had become established, and the mature mind was closed to the acquiring of knowledge. Thus the thoughts of this pioneer of reform gradually turned towards the neglected children of Gloucester. If only they could be redeemed from lives of idleness, ignorance, and crime, it might yet be possible to change social conditions. So Raikes added a fourth tenet to his Gospel of social reform :

Begin with the child—teach him.

Apparently he began his work on behalf of childhood by persuading some of the city arabs to meet him after the early morning service at the cathedral. In this way he gathered them

informally in the cathedral yard, and tried to teach them the catechism, rewarding the eager ones with pennies. How often, or how long, these attempts were made cannot now be traced, but judging from his later experience, it was probably only on rare occasions that children would meet him for such a purpose.

It was easier to discover a remedy for social evils than to find a way of applying it successfully. These attempts to teach a few children hard by the cathedral failed again and again, because the children did not want to learn. Probably they were suspicious of Raikes and his class. Moreover, they and their parents were in league against all authority, and abhorred any idea of discipline. After years of oppression, most of the poorer people had accepted the position thrust upon them, and believed that they were incapable of learning, and had no use for it. Therefore the idea of ' beginning with the child ' must at first have seemed to Raikes like attempting the impossible.

The possibility of using Sunday for educating the children in the ways of virtue seems to have come to him almost by accident. One day he had occasion to journey to St. Catherine's Meadows, in a distant part of the city, in search of a gardener. It was a low-lying district near the river, and housing conditions were rather worse there than in other places. Near-by was a large pin factory—one of the industries of Gloucester that employed many of the men and women of the city, and the children over seven years of age. Raikes at last found the house that he was

seeking, and was talking to the gardener's wife on her doorstep when their voices were almost drowned by an outburst of quarrelling, yelling, and swearing, from a group of wretched-looking children in rags near-by. The incident was too familiar to surprise Raikes, but it moved him to compassion, and he said to the woman:

'It's a pity that something can't be done with these children. Do they belong to this part of the town?'

'Ah, sir,' was the reply, 'if you could see this part of the town on a Sunday, you would be shocked indeed. Then the street is filled with multitudes of little wretches, released on that day from the work in the factories. They spend their time in noise and riot, playing at "chuck," and cursing and swearing in such a horrid manner as to make the place like hell on earth.'

This incident made a great impression on Raikes, and he went slowly home, deep in thought. He determined to find some way of remedying this evil. The idea came to him that if he could gather some of these children into a school on Sundays, it would put the day to a good use, and also give the experiment the best chance of success, since the children over seven would be free of factory attendance.

For the next few days the words of the woman at St. Catherine's Meadows burned in his brain, even while the streets of his native city rang with the raucous voices of unruly children, and reminded him at the corner of every alley of the insuperable difficulties that stood in the way of their improvement.

Then one day something happened. As he was walking home from the early service at the cathedral, thinking once again of his project of a school for the gutter-snipes of Gloucester, the word TRY came so forcefully to his mind that he looked round to see if anybody was near and speaking to him. That settled the problem for the practical-minded Raikes. He determined to try his experiment at once, and to obey what he regarded as a Divine command.

Another seeming coincidence happened at that time and confirmed him in his purpose. He chanced to meet the clergyman of a neighbouring parish, the Rev. Thomas Stock, and talked to him of his plan. Stock's interest was aroused at once, and he promised to help Raikes all he could.

Before the experiment could be launched, Raikes had to find a teacher for his school, and then seek out scholars who would be willing to attend and learn. He found his first teacher in a Mrs. Meredith, who lived in Sooty Alley, in Littleworth, one of the worst slum-districts of the city. Mrs. Meredith agreed to use her kitchen on Sundays as a kind of school, for the sum of one shilling per week. To this woman Raikes brought such ragged urchins as he could induce to attend. Probably some of them were children of the debtors in the gaol, for this first Sunday school in Gloucester was situated right opposite the prison itself.

One of the scholars who attended this school was still living in 1863, when Josiah Harris, the biographer of Raikes, was collecting material

about his hero. This former scholar could remember being sent to Sooty Alley Sunday School when five years old.

'The place was called Sooty Alley because the chimney-sweeps lived there,' he declared. 'This, I believe, was the first Sunday school opened in Gloucester. A woman named Meredith kept the school. There were twelve or fourteen boys when I went there.'

Looking back, the old man could remember that 'the boys were terrible bad,' and Mrs. Meredith was not strong enough to handle such wild boys. During the six months that he attended the school he 'did not learn much, except perhaps to sit still, which the older boys found very hard to learn.'

This school did not last long, probably because Mrs. Meredith could not manage the boys. Most of them pined for the freedom of the streets, and would not go a second time unless there was a strong inducement. Stock could not take any active part in the school, as it was outside his parish. Raikes himself evidently regarded this as a preliminary experiment, for within a few months he started a second school under much more favourable conditions and transferred the Sooty Alley scholars to it.

Again accident seemed to favour Raikes's scheme. Mrs. Mary Critchley, landlady of the Trumpet Inn at Littleworth, near the county gaol, impressed Raikes as a strong-willed, capable woman, well able to handle the ragamuffins he was experimenting with. He called

on her and proposed that she should take some of the boys in hand on Sundays. Mrs. Critchley seemed willing to fall in with his plan. He then learned that she was about to move into a more commodious house in Southgate Street, one of the main thoroughfares of the city. Raikes was overjoyed at this news, for the house she mentioned was facing St. Mary de Crypt Church, and close by his own dwelling. Had he been free to choose a site for his next experiment, he could have found nothing better! He accordingly agreed to pay her a shilling a week for teaching any boys he could persuade to attend.

In this providential way, Raikes was led to start what proved, in fact, to be the pioneer Sunday school in Gloucester,* for it was the successful experiment upon which the Sunday school movement itself was afterwards founded. The Sooty Alley school was never anything more than a temporary expedient, started while Raikes was seeking a good teacher to co-operate with his great plan.

* Several places have claimed the title of 'the first Sunday school in Gloucester,' but the evidence shows that the first *permanent* school was held at Mrs. Critchley's. James King's house in Catherine Street, which is often regarded as Raikes's first school, was probably opened soon afterwards by the joint work of Raikes and Stock.

Chapter Three

THE EXPERIMENT IN SOUTHGATE STREET

'THERE'S Bobby Wild Goose and his ragged regiment,' said old Mrs. Herbert to her daughter Arabella.

The girl heard these words so often, as she played outside her mother's cottage near Raikes's office, that they remained in her memory to her dying day.

Thus, when an old woman of seventy-two, she could recall quite distinctly how Raikes used to gather the wild ragamuffins from the streets of Gloucester, and so recruit the first real Sunday school he founded. Arabella herself was sent to one of the other Gloucester Sunday schools that were started a few years later.

At first only boys were admitted to the Sunday school conducted by Dame Critchley in her kitchen in Southgate Street. And it is clear, from the recollections of veterans like Arabella Herbert, that the first Sunday scholars were 'a rough lot' and 'terrible bad.'

We can hardly expect otherwise when we remember that from their earliest days the poor children of Gloucester ran riot in the streets and fields, with never an hour of schooling or the slightest touch of discipline. The only kind of authority they recognised was that of their father, and this rested solely on superior brute force. Such being the case, we can quite under-

stand the difficulty that Raikes had to face in getting scholars to come to his first Sunday school.

The novelty of the thing probably helped to get a boy to the school once, but as neither Raikes nor Mrs. Critchley would stand any nonsense, and expected the boys to learn passages of Scripture and verses of hymns, most of them never came again.

There could have been nothing very attractive about the school itself, which was held in the flagged kitchen. The boys sat on rough benches or on the ground in the centre of the room, such furniture as there was being pushed back round the walls. At first no books were used whatever, for none of the boys could read.

'Now, boys, try to sing this line after me,' Mrs. Critchley would begin during a lull in the noise, and in her high-pitched voice would start:

"Before Jehovah's awful throne
Ye nations bow with sacred joy."

No sooner did a few of the younger boys make an attempt to repeat the line and sing the tune than they were interrupted by cat-calls and jeers from the older boys. At once Mrs. Critchley would stop her singing to scold the unruly scholars.

'You shut that row and sing properly, Bill Brick, and you too, Jim Bourne. And if you don't stop pinching the boy in front, Sam Pitt, I'll tell Mester Reekes about you!'

Another start would be made at Isaac Watts's

hymn, and the first two verses laboured through with little music and much interruption. Then, if Mrs. Critchley were lucky, Raikes would walk in before the ragged scholars got further out of hand. He had ' a wonderful way with children,' and his fine presence and grand air, no less than the stout cane he carried, enabled him to command obedience and compel attention.

In comparative quiet Raikes would read one of the stories about Jesus to the boys, and urge them to give up fighting and swearing, and to come to Sunday school regularly, and so hear more about Jesus Christ, Who went about doing good, and teaching people how to live good lives. Raikes would then question the boys about what they had heard, and give pennies to those who made pleasing answers.

More often than not, however, the situation when he visited the school called for punishment rather than reward. The more mischievous boys found plenty of ways of enlivening the school by upsetting the bench upon which other boys were sitting, putting pins on Mother Critchley's chair, or pushing and pinching each other. These tricks often led to a free fight, and to such an uproar that the shrill scolding of Mrs. Critchley was lost in the din ; seizing a broom, she would literally sweep some of them out of the door. In those experimental days Raikes sometimes arrived to find that the school had been disbanded, the boys having been so unruly that Mrs. Critchley had been compelled to drive them all away.

' The little varmints can't be made to learn,'

she would say. ' It's a waste of time trying to teach 'em.'

' You must not give up yet, Mrs. Critchley,' Raikes would reply, as he paid her the shilling due for her labours. ' We must try, try, and try again before we give up the attempt.'

With a heavy heart he would start out again to find a fresh batch of scholars.

It required a great deal of patience and a large faith in humanity for the pioneer to persevere in his efforts to redeem the rising generation in Gloucester. Sometimes he spent a whole morning in St. Catherine's Nap or St. Mary's Nap, the low-lying meadows near the river which were the playing-fields of many of the Gloucester ragamuffins. He would move freely among the crowd of yelling children, looking out for boys he knew by sight, or those he had already befriended at the gaols.

According to one veteran, who could remember succumbing to the blandishments of ' Mester Reekes,' the latter would say :

' I will give you all sorts of nice things if you will come regularly, with nicely-washed faces, and will comb your hair properly.'

Many were the promises he received, but little was the subsequent performance. Could it be true, after all, as his friend Jimmy Wood so often declared, that the children of the vulgar were incapable of learning ? Fortunate was it that, as he wended his way homewards from such an excursion, he had to pass the corner of a certain street where, some months before, the Divine voice had bidden him TRY. With

uplifted heart he would quicken his steps, determined to make fresh efforts in the enterprise to which he felt called.

Gradually a handful of boys began to come regularly and show an interest in the school. One of their first lessons was in personal cleanliness, which in this case was next to godliness.

As soon as he could exercise authority over his Sunday scholars, 'Buck Raikes,' who trod the Gloucester streets delicately like a lady of high degree, to avoid splashing his silk stockings, insisted on clean faces and hands and nicely combed hair. It was not easy to get the children to wash properly, because what clothes they wore were not only ragged, but very filthy. Patiently he taught them that if they could not be nicely dressed, or wear fine clothes like the children of the better-to-do, they could at least come to school with clean faces and hands. To help them to learn this lesson, Raikes taught them this rhyme :

'Clean hands, clean face, and tidy hair,
Are better than fine clothes to wear.'

Boys who showed any aptitude to learn were at once taught to read by Mrs. Critchley, and it was with great pride that the dame would make them read a verse or two of Scripture aloud when Raikes paid his usual visit to the school.

'That's fine, my boy,' Raikes would say, when the ordeal was over, and the boy had stumbled painfully through a verse from the Psalms. 'Don't forget those words you have read, and

go on with your reading. Here is a penny for you as a reward.'

Such signs of progress, however, were punctuated by outbursts of disorder and fighting, that brought home to Raikes the need for making haste slowly. Sometimes when he arrived at the school the angry look on Mrs. Critchley's face, and a black eye or gory nose among the scholars, told their own tale, and he would say severely, 'I can see what bad boys you have been.'

On other occasions he would have to deal with a situation that was beyond even Mrs. Critchley, who could manage unruly boys better than any other woman in the town. The boys sometimes fought like little demons, and only the arrival of Raikes and his cane, with which he belaboured the combatants with a right good will, would bring the riot to an end. When we remember that Raikes recruited his first scholars from the lowest of the low, it is not surprising to learn that this corporal punishment had to be introduced into the school soon after it started.

Some of those early scenes make unpleasant reading to-day, but allowance must be made for the rougher age in which Raikes lived. A mischievous boy who stuck pins in other scholars or drowned their attempts at reading by raucous cat-calls, would be duly reported to Raikes. Words of stern reproof having proved fruitless, Raikes would proceed to punish the offender. Mrs. Critchley's chair was turned down on its front legs and Raikes would seize the offender by the scruff of the neck, put him across the

back of the chair, and give him a good caning, the boy kicking and swearing all the time.

One boy who had to be severely caned was known by his confederates as Winkin' Jim. Jim was the terror of the alley in which he lived, and one of the few boys of whom even Mrs. Critchley was afraid. Other scholars of the Southgate Street school seemed full of mischief, but Winkin' Jim had a gift for it! Nothing pleased him better than inventing a new way of upsetting the school and 'making old Mother Critchley wild.'

One morning Jim slipped in late, and seemed anxious to avoid attention. Some of the boys saw that he was hiding something inside his coat, and waited gleefully to see what would happen. They did not have to wait long. At a moment when all was quiet, Winkin' Jim suddenly released a young badger among the scholars. The little animal dashed wildly away from the boys and towards Mrs. Critchley. The terrified woman jumped on her chair and screamed to the boys to 'catch the varmint.' No one seemed anxious to obey, and for a few minutes pandemonium reigned. Needless to say, when Raikes arrived on the scene, Winkin' Jim was severely dealt with.

Not for one moment should it be thought that Raikes was confining his experiment in Sunday school work to Mrs. Critchley's school in Southgate Street. This, being the nearest to his own home, opposite his own church, and in the heart of his own parish, secured most of his attention. At the same time, however, he was

experimenting with other schools in less desirable parts of Gloucester, in close co-operation with the Rev. Thomas Stock, vicar of the adjoining parish, and curate of another parish in the city.

These two men worked in such close association in opening Sunday schools, visiting them regularly, and paying the necessary money for the teaching, that it was afterwards claimed that to Stock rather than Raikes belongs the honour of founding the Sunday School movement. The claims made on behalf of Thomas Stock were conscientiously investigated by Josiah Harris at Gloucester, seventy years ago, and rejected. Stock himself acknowledged Raikes as the pioneer of the movement, for in a letter dated February 2, 1788, he wrote: 'The progress of this institution is justly attributed to the constant representations which Mr. Raikes made in his own paper on the benefits which he perceived would probably arise from it.'

Summing up the position, it appears that Raikes talked over his plan with Stock when launching his enterprise, and Stock started Sunday schools in his own parish soon afterwards. Both men visited all the schools systematically and indiscriminately. It was Raikes who, for the most part, paid the teachers' fees for these first Sunday schools. This we should expect, since he was a man of means as compared with Stock, who was a poor cleric, and had to raise money by public subscription.

As we shall see later, the claim that Raikes is the real father of the Sunday school movement must be based on what the printer of Gloucester

did for Sunday schools after the experimental stage had been passed. After Raikes had started, he and Stock worked together during the earlier stages, but whereas Stock, under the Church of England system, had to confine the starting of Sunday schools to his own parishes, the whole of the city was open to the work of his lay colleague.

Raikes's school in Sooty Alley was apparently little more than a recruiting place for the real and first school, started in Southgate Street as soon as Mrs. Critchley moved there. It was *after* the Southgate Street school had been opened that Stock started a school of his own in Dolphin Lane, under the care of a man named Bamford. The boys who belonged to Mr. Stock's parish were then removed from the Southgate Street school to Dolphin Lane. Some other schools were opened by Stock and placed in the charge of school mistresses, who were paid one pound per quarter for their services. Several old people living in 1863, when Josiah Harris investigated the founding of the Sunday school movement, could remember attending these schools, and said they were regularly visited by Robert Raikes.

All evidence shows that the school hard by his own dwelling received the lion's share of Raikes's time and attention. In Mrs. Critchley he had a teacher of exceptional ability for handling such very raw material—and it was on his success at Southgate Street that Raikes launched the Sunday School movement later.

Chapter Four

STRUGGLE AND VICTORY

'MESTER REEKES, why can't *we* come to Sunday school?' This question was sung in chorus by a group of little girls in rags and tatters, who had waylaid the printer of Gloucester at the door of his office. Raikes looked down at the group with a smile and answered teasingly, 'What do little girls want at school?'

'We want to learn to read—and to sing hymns,' piped one small voice.

'Like my brother can,' added another.

'You'd have to wash your faces and comb your hair,' threatened Raikes, still rather amused at the proposal. He eventually sent the girls away with a penny to buy some goodies, after promising to see what he could do. Up to that time he had thought only of the ragged boys of Gloucester in his experiment. Dame Critchley's school was now well established, and several others were making satisfactory progress. If, as now seemed likely, the Sunday school as an institution had come to stay, it might be possible to start girls' schools as well.

At that time, however, his hands were pretty full. He still visited the prisons regularly, and had not only saved some of the unfortunate inmates of the Bridewell from starvation, but secured some improvement in their lot generally. Through the *Journal*, clothing and even work was being provided for discharged debtors and

released prisoners. As Raikes administered this social service personally, he was kept busily occupied. But time had to be found to visit his Sunday schools regularly. He had also started week-night schools, for teaching the children of the poor to read and write. One of these day schools was kept by Mary Critchley. They were apparently opened to supplement the Sunday schools by teaching the scholars to read and write, so that the whole of the precious hours on Sunday could be used for religious education.

Raikes was now becoming known in Gloucester as the children's friend. Many of them followed him to and from church, and on fine days he would spend some time in the cathedral yard after the early morning service, talking to them and catechising them. Those who gave the best answers often received a small prize, sometimes a penny or a comb. In due time schools were established for the girls, but at different hours, and entirely separate, from the boys' schools. One old lady, looking back in 1863 on her Sunday school days, said :

' Mr Raikes had a very good way with children. He had authority with him, and yet they were not afraid. He would pat them on the head and on the cheeks, and touch them under the chin, and say they were good and nice and clean, if they were so. He liked to see boys' and girls' hair combed. Many children never saw a comb before he gave them one. Their hair was all matted, and it was not easy to use a comb at first. The children would use their fingers for a time.'

Some kind of routine now appears to have developed in the Sunday schools in Gloucester. This must have been due to the energy and initiative of Raikes, who was a methodical and enterprising man of business. The outward form and organisation of the Sunday School movement was obviously moulded by his own hand. Children of any age were accepted, for in one case on record a girl attended 'Raikes's School,' as the Southgate Street Sunday School was called, 'as soon as she could walk.' There was one essential qualification for admission, and that was cleanliness.

'All that I require,' said Raikes to the parents, 'are clean hands, clean faces, and their hair combed.' None were to be turned away because their clothes were dirty or ragged. 'If you have no clean shirt, come in what you have on,' said Raikes. When the ragamuffins pointed to their tattered garments and shoeless feet as excuses for their non-attendance, Raikes said to them: 'If you can loiter about without shoes, and in a ragged coat, you may as well come to school and learn what may tend to your good.'

School began at ten o'clock on Sunday mornings, and usually went on until one. The scholars reassembled in the afternoon, and at four o'clock walked across to St. Mary de Crypt Church for a service, at which they were sometimes catechised by the minister. They then returned to school for more instruction, which went on until five-thirty. Raikes usually attended the opening of the school. He greeted the children on their arrival, and generally

inspected them. According to one authority those who were dirty or slovenly in appearance were reproved, while those who were clean were warmly commended, whether their clothes were in good order or not.

Some of the younger or more backward scholars still had to be taught to read, but most of the children could be set to read the Bible, to learn parts of the Church catechism, and some of Dr. Watts's hymns. The chief portions of the Bible that were used in the first schools appear to have been the Psalms and the Gospels. Raikes was still driven to use the cane for unruly scholars, but he did not hesitate to offer suitable rewards to the well-behaved and diligent. Prizes of simple reading-books, combs, shoes, and articles of apparel were awarded to the most promising scholars.

Some of the more successful schools, notably the one in charge of Mary Critchley, increased in such numbers that they outgrew the accommodation. When Mrs. Critchley's kitchen became too small, the school was moved to the church opposite, then to the Grammar School adjoining the church. The next move was to the Corn Exchange for a time, till the difficulties of warming such a large building in the winter compelled Raikes to move the school back to St. Mary de Crypt Church. The greatest number of scholars that attended this school, so far as one of the veterans could remember afterwards, was between one hundred and one hundred and twenty children.

It would be a mistake to suppose, however,

that because these general conditions seem rather similar to those of Sunday schools to-day, there has been little development since. Passing references in the old records remind us sharply that Raikes lived in a barbarous age. Some of the parents adopted brutal methods to compel their wild and reckless boys to attend Sunday school. In the worst quarters of the town some of the boys were marched to school with a fourteen-pound weight tied to their legs, while others had logs of wood fastened to their ankles to prevent their escape. Stories are on record of rebellious Sunday scholars being ' strapped ' all the way to school by their parents—which means that the father took off his leather belt and chastised his offspring through the streets till he was safely in Sunday school. Such brutal methods went unnoticed in a time when men and women for minor offences were shackled to the tail of a cart and publicly flogged through the streets as punishment.

Sometimes, if the caning inflicted by Raikes himself did not meet the case, he marched an unusually bad boy home for the father to give him a ' walloping.' What is more, according to one authority, ' he'd stop and see it done, and then bring the young urchin back rubbing his eyes and other places. Mr. Raikes was a terror to all evil-doers, and a praise to them that did well.'

We have another reminder of the brutal standards of that day in the reminiscences of one of Mary Critchley's early scholars. The story has been used by Raikes's critics to

belittle his character and challenge his motives, but allowance must be made for the times in which he lived, and the degraded state of many of his earlier scholars.

' " One boy was a notorious liar. No, I don't remember his name for certain. He was sure to have had a nickname, but I don't remember it. Mr. Raikes could do nothing with him, and one day he caught him by the hand and pressed the tips of his fingers on the bars of the stove or fireplace."

' " Was he burnt ? "

' " Blistered a bit. Mr. Raikes would take care that he was not much injured ; but he did hate liars ! Look at my book. This is what he printed for us to learn : ' A thief is better than a man who is accustomed to lie." '

This, fortunately, was a very extreme case : for the most part the boys submitted to discipline after a mild caning. The better methods of direct teaching, kind persuasion, and the offering of rewards was usually sufficient to meet the case. From Raikes's correspondence it is clear that the curriculum was carefully adapted to meet the special needs of the time. He writes :

' The great principle I inculcate in the children is to be kind and good-natured to each other ; not to provoke one another ; to be dutiful to their parents ; not to offend God by cursing and swearing ; and such little plain precepts as all may comprehend.'

The prevalent vice of cursing and swearing was particularly singled out for correction.

Raikes was a great believer in the visitation of scholars, and the value of getting to know their parents. He took no narrow view of his relationship to both parents and scholars. A story has come down to us of one of his visits to a scholar in her home that shows the other side of Raikes, the disciplinarian. He found the girl in question in disgrace, crying and sulking. The mother related a doleful story of the girl's bad behaviour and obstinacy, and declared that punishment failed to improve matters. Asking the mother's permission, Raikes spoke seriously to the girl about her conduct, urged her to turn over a new leaf and, as a first step, to kneel down and ask her mother's pardon.

The girl made no response to Raikes's advances, and remained unmoved and sulky. Unable to make her yield by persuasion, he went on :

' If you have no regard for yourself, I have much regard for you. You will be ruined and lost if you do not begin to be a good girl ; and if you will not humble yourself, I must make a beginning for you.'

Suiting the action to the words, Raikes went down on his knees and begged the mother's forgiveness on the girl's behalf. No sooner did the obstinate girl see Raikes in that humble position, taking her place, than her obduracy broke down. Bursting into tears she knelt beside him, begged for forgiveness, and from that day showed a marked improvement in her behaviour.

Raikes had won the day by methods that to-day we call ' modern ! '

Chapter Five

RAGGED ROBINS AT CHURCH

'BOBBY WILD-GOOSE' had by this time become a notorious character in Gloucester. In a day when the vulgar were left severely alone by the better-off, it was inevitable that Raikes's ceaseless activity on behalf of the neglected children and prisoners should make him talked about.

The uneducated masses were held in such derision in those days that any effort to educate them was scoffed at as a 'wild-goose-chase.' When we remember, too, that Raikes was one of the best-dressed men in Gloucester, it is easy to imagine that the sight of such a dandy being followed by a group of tatter-demalion gutter-snipes caused much merriment.

So particular was Raikes about keeping his shoes and stockings unsmirched, that in later years he paid a man to keep the footpath swept clean between his printing office and his house. At night a manservant walked in front of him with a lantern, to safeguard his immaculate master from stepping into puddles of filth, or into the kennel—the open drain—that disfigured and odorised even the main streets of Gloucester. Such pride of appearance as Raikes possessed was clearly not of the wrong kind, or he would never have appeared in public, as he frequently did, at the head of a procession of ragged children.

Quite early in his Sunday school experiment, Raikes personally escorted his Sunday school boys to the parish church for the afternoon service. Sometimes he took them to the cathedral services, talked to them in the streets, and visited them in their homes, indifferent to public opinion. Occasionally his boys let him down badly in public, but that made no difference to his championship of them.

We need to remember that the clergy and religious people of his day deliberately shunned the vulgar, as they called the masses, and were cordially disliked and avoided by the people in consequence. Few, if any, of the poorer folk ever went to the church services, and they would not have been welcomed had they put in an appearance. Sunday for the masses was a day of rioting and drunkenness, for the pursuance of popular blood-sports such as cock-fighting and bull-baiting. That being so, the unprecedented action of Raikes in piloting twenty or thirty ragged urchins to the church made the respectable congregation gape with astonishment and dismay. The beadles were particularly indignant, for ceaseless war was waged between them and the children of the vulgar—and in most of such conflicts the children got the best of it. Small wonder, then, that Raikes was regarded as 'mad' to bring these ragamuffins into the house of God. On his part, he was much too occupied with keeping his followers in order to notice the hostility of worshippers or officials.

The experience of being in church was, of

course, entirely novel to the boys. At first they were rather overawed by their surroundings, but this soon wore off, and then Raikes's troubles began. Being complete strangers to worship, they knew not when to stand, sit down, or kneel. This led to some ludicrous mistakes, and these caused merriment that could not be entirely suppressed. All the authority of Raikes could not, on some occasions, prevent a scene.

One morning a boy enjoying the nickname of 'Mugs' saw that the boy next to him in the pew was nodding with slumber. Ever ready for mischief, Mugs produced a shawl pin (an unusually large pin about three inches long), and jammed it well into the anatomy of the nodding boy. The sleeper awoke with a loud yell of pain, jumped in the air, swore horribly, and then flew at the throat of Mugs. A fierce fight began, and the beadles at once came on the scene and turned both boys out.

A boy present that morning declared, when an old man, 'I have never forgotten the look of pain and horror on the face of Mr. Raikes at such a happening.' The sequel to the incident was a visit by Raikes to the father of Mugs, and a sound 'leathering' for the offender. It is amusing to discover that the father afterwards said to a neighbour:

'I've strapped Joe well. I doan't know what for, except that Mr. Reekes told me I must. I was very mad about having to do it.'

Things improved in time, however, as Raikes won the confidence of a set of little ragamuffins that would have disgusted other men less

zealous to do good. The children began to look up to him with such a mixture of respect and attention as endeared them to him, and interested him more and more in their welfare. It required time, of course, to drill them to a proper observation of the outward ceremonies of religion—he had to teach them to kneel, stand, and sit down in the different parts of the service. But they kept their eyes on him, and taking the cue from his actions learned in time the outward forms of divine worship, even though they could not understand the reason for everything.

Nor was Raikes's interest in the ragged robins of Gloucester confined to taking them to church, or shepherding them into school on Sundays. Sometimes the keener children would follow him about, and he would take them into his garden, and question them in an informal sort of school session. Sometimes he would use these gatherings to teach the children from the Bible, reading a chapter and explaining it to them.

As the number of Sunday Schools increased in Gloucester, through the zealous efforts of Robert Raikes and Thomas Stock, some improvement was seen in the city streets on Sundays. There was less noise and riot, and a greater sense of Sabbath peace and tranquillity abroad. As the pioneer's method was to capture the ringleaders of riot and mischief, and commandeer them for the schools, the improvement in the general situation was greater than might be imagined. With the Sunday schools taking many of the children from the streets on Sun-

days, from early morning till late afternoon, there was a noticeable increase in Sabbath quiet, and the citizens of Gloucester were compelled to admit that Raikes's experiment was having good effect.

Meanwhile, his 'plan,' as he called it, was beginning to be talked about, and public-spirited people in outlying villages and neighbouring towns came to see this thing for themselves. Marvelling greatly, they were allowed to visit the schools and catechise the children. Some of them were then invited by Raikes to dine with him, and so received the benefit of his advice and help in making similar experiments. The result was that a number of Sunday schools were started in the county. Some of these were visited by Raikes himself, who was in the habit of driving over in a chaise and pair to the more outlying places. Successful schools were established at Painswick and Nailsworth. It was claimed for these schools in particular that Raikes borrowed his idea from one or other of their promoters. But it is significant that such claims were generally made years afterwards, by relatives of their founders who—waking up to the fact that Sunday schools were in general favour, and that Raikes was credited with being their founder—suddenly discovered that it was their own father, or grandfather, or uncle who had started the first school in the county, and had suggested to Raikes that the idea was a good one for the county town!

As a matter of historical fact, the real founder

of the Sunday school (using the term in the sense of the first person to conceive the idea of gathering children separately on Sundays for religious instruction) must be looked for in the Middle Ages. It is on record that Cardinal Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan, organised Sunday schools in 1566 for the teaching and catechising of children in his own district, but the experiment came to nought after his death. An Ecclesiastical Synod, held in London in 1603, ordered ministers to catechise children every Sunday. Nearer Raikes's own day, from 1655-8, the Rev. Joseph Alleine gathered children on Sundays at Taunton and Bath for teaching. In 1763 there is a record that a Yorkshire clergyman and his wife taught the children of the parish in the church on Sundays.

A few years later Miss Hannah Ball gathered children at High Wycombe, both in the nave of the parish church and in her own home, and read the Bible and expounded it to them. In a letter dated 1770 she tells John Wesley that ' the children meet twice a week—every Sunday and Monday. They are a wild little company, but seem willing to be instructed. I labour among them earnestly, desiring to promote the interest of the Church of Christ.' It is often claimed that Hannah Ball is thereby the founder of Sunday schools !

In the county of Gloucester itself a Mrs. Catherine Boevey, of Flaxley Abbey, who died in 1776, made a similar experiment. Her monument refers to her ' clothing and feeding her indigent neighbours and teaching their

children, some of whom every Sunday by turn she entertained at her house, and condescended to examine them herself.'

These indisputable records show that neither Robert Raikes nor Hannah Ball were the originators of Sunday schools. Summing up the position as far as Raikes is concerned, it appears that he made the first experiment, and that soon after, when he and Thomas Stock worked together, there were four Sunday schools in Gloucester; and that other schools sprang into existence in the county soon after. Up to 1780 the schools that had been started at various times by various people were nothing more than isolated experiments, and it is probable that the pioneers we have mentioned are only the few cases that happen to be on record. From 1780 to 1783 Robert Raikes was undoubtedly the prime mover in a systematic and persistent experiment in Sunday school work in and around Gloucester. In 1783 Raikes launched the movement on a national and permanent scale. We are therefore on firm ground in claiming that Robert Raikes—and no other—was the real pioneer of the Sunday School movement.

Chapter Six

THE REAL BEGINNING OF SUNDAY SCHOOLS

RAIKES was not a visionary ; nor was he a pioneer in a hurry, anxious to steal a march on others ; neither was he eager for notoriety as the founder of Sunday schools. This fact is abundantly clear from the caution, if not hesitancy, that he showed before launching his scheme on a wide scale. Three years passed after his first experiment in Sooty Alley, before he ventured to call public attention in the *Gloucester Journal* to the value of the Sunday school as a reliable instrument for educating and Christianising the masses.

No one, therefore, can accuse him of trying to forestall other claimants to the title that he never claimed for himself, viz., the founder of Sunday schools. On the other hand, it is probable that these three years of quiet experiment opened the door to some who claimed the title of ' founder.' Generally speaking, the date of the founding of Sunday schools by Raikes has been regarded as 1783, whereas he started the work in 1780, but did not make it known until three years later. Thus it came about that schools that were started before 1783—but as the direct result of his experiments—were claimed to be earlier than his, and as having suggested to him the launching of the movement !

A careful investigation of the oldest records, and a comparison of other claims, establish the

fact that it was not before three years of quiet work had proved that his schools would continue, and succeed in their purpose, that he used his newspaper to extend their influence. Even then it cannot be said that there was anything flamboyant or self-advertising about his announcement, which was anonymous. The following paragraph appeared in the *Gloucester Journal* of November 3rd, 1783:

'Some of the clergy, in different parts of this county, bent upon attempting a reform among the children of the lower class, are establishing Sunday schools, for rendering the Lord's-day subservient to the ends of instruction, which has hitherto been prostituted to bad purposes. Farmers, and other inhabitants of the towns and villages, complain that they receive more injury in their property on the Sabbath, than all the week besides: this in a great measure proceeds from the lawless state of the younger class, who are allowed to run wild on that day, free from every restraint. To remedy this evil, persons duly qualified are employed to instruct those that cannot read: and those that may have learnt to read, are taught the Catechism and conducted to church. By thus keeping their minds engaged, the day passes profitably, and not disagreeably. In those parishes where the plan has been adopted, we are assured that the behaviour of the children is greatly civilised. The barbarous ignorance in which they had before lived being in some degree dispelled, they begin to give proofs that those persons are mistaken, who consider the lower orders of man-

kind as incapable of improvement, and therefore think an attempt to reclaim them impracticable, or, at least, not worth the trouble.'

In this rambling and somewhat stilted style, Raikes started a publicity campaign that resulted in Sunday schools being established in many parts of England in an incredibly short space of time. As often happened, this piece of rural news was copied in the *London Chronicle*, and so was broadcast to the principal towns in Great Britain.

The effect was instantaneous. Most of the towns and cities of that day were like Gloucester —cursed by a swarming, quarrelling and fighting population of youngsters in their streets. The more progressive of the clergy and many public-spirited laymen were only too glad to try any experiment that promised to remedy this evil with some prospect of success. The result was that others determined to try the plan that had succeeded in Gloucester.

Raikes soon proved fortunate in his friends. John Nichols, owner and proprietor of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, a monthly periodical of standing and influence, at once championed the new idea and gave it publicity and support.

Next to the announcement in the *Journal* of November 3rd, a letter that Raikes wrote three weeks later to Colonel Townley, of Sheffield, did more to make the new movement known than anything else. The gallant colonel read the anonymous and ambiguous paragraph about the Gloucester experiment in the *London Chronicle*, and at once wrote to the Mayor of

Gloucester, begging for further details. Raikes replied in a long and detailed letter which was so highly valued by Colonel Townley that he sent a copy of it to John Nichols. So useful did this further information on the subject of Sunday schools appear to Nichols that—in spite of its great length, which proved a serious editorial problem—he published it verbatim in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in June, 1784. The commendatory notice that Nichols attached to it must be quoted, because it has a prophetic ring about it: 'It is with pleasure,' he says, 'that we give place to this benevolent plan, which bids fair to transmit the name of Mr. Raikes to latest posterity.' This important document must be reprinted here, for it reveals the religious motive of the pioneer, and also shows his warm-hearted zeal in extending the movement.

'My friend, the mayor, has just communicated to me the letter which you have honoured him with, enquiring into the nature of the Sunday schools. The beginning of this scheme was entirely owing to accident. Some business leading me one morning into the suburbs of the city, where the lowest of the people (who are principally employed in the pin-manufactory) chiefly reside, I was struck with concern at seeing a group of children wretchedly ragged, at play in the street. I asked an inhabitant whether those children belonged to that part of the town, and lamented their misery and idleness. "Ah! Sir," said the woman to whom I was speaking, "could you take a view of this part of

the town on a Sunday, you would be shocked indeed, for then the street is filled with multitudes of these wretches, who, released on that day from employment, spend their time in noise and riot, playing at "chuck," and cursing and swearing in a manner so horrid as to convey to any serious mind an idea of hell rather than any other place. We have a worthy clergyman* (said she), curate of our parish, who has put some of them to school; but upon the Sabbath, they are all given up to follow their inclinations without restraint, as their parents, totally abandoned themselves, have no idea of instilling into the minds of their children, principles to which they themselves are entire strangers."

'This conversation suggested to me that it would be at least a harmless attempt, if it were productive of no good, should some little plan be formed to check the deplorable profanation of the Sabbath. I then enquired of the woman, if there were any decent well-disposed women in the neighbourhood who kept schools for teaching to read. I presently was directed to four; to these I applied, and made an agreement with them to receive as many children as I should send upon the Sunday, whom they were to instruct in reading, and in the Church Catechism. For this I engaged to pay them each a shilling for their day's employment. The women seemed pleased with the proposal. I then waited on the clergyman before mentioned, and imparted to him my plan; he was so much satisfied with the idea, that he engaged to lend his assistance,

* The Rev. Thomas Stock is referred to.

by going round to the schools on a Sunday afternoon, to examine the progress that was made, and to enforce order and decorum among such a set of little heathens.

'This, Sir, was the commencement of the plan. It is now about three years since we began, and I could wish you were here to make enquiry into the effect. A woman who lived in a lane where I had fixed a school told me some time ago, that the place was quite a heaven upon Sundays, compared to what it used to be. The numbers who have learned to read and say their catechism are so great that I am astonished at it. Upon the Sunday afternoon the mistresses take their scholars to church, a place into which neither they nor their ancestors had ever before entered, with a view to the glory of God. But what is yet more extraordinary, within this month, these little ragamuffins have in great numbers taken it into their heads to frequent the early morning prayers, which are held every morning at the cathedral at seven o'clock. I believe there were nearly fifty this morning. They assemble at the house of one of the mistresses, and walk before her to church, two and two, in as much order as a company of soldiers. I am generally at church, and after service they all come round me to make their bow; and if any animosities have arisen, to make their complaints.

'The great principle I inculcate is, to be kind and good natured to each other; not to provoke one another; to be dutiful to their parents; not to offend God by cursing and swearing;

and such little plain precepts as all may comprehend. As my profession is that of a printer, I have printed a little book, which I give amongst them: and some friends of mine, subscribers to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, sometimes make me a present of a parcel of Bibles, Testaments, etc., which I distribute as rewards to the deserving. The success that has attended this scheme has induced one or two of my friends to adopt the plan, and set up Sunday schools in other parts of the city, and now a whole parish has taken up the object, so that I flatter myself in time the good effects will appear so conspicuous as to become generally adopted. The number of children at present thus engaged on the Sabbath are between two and three hundred, and they are increasing every week, as the benefit is universally seen. I have endeavoured to engage the clergy of my acquaintance that reside in their parishes. One has entered into the scheme with great fervour*, and it was in order to excite others to follow the example, that I inserted in my paper the paragraph which I suppose you saw copied into the London papers.

'I cannot express to you the pleasure I often receive in discovering genius and innate good dispositions among this little multitude. It is botanising in human nature. I have often, too, the satisfaction of receiving thanks from parents for the reformation they perceive in their children. Often have I given them kind admonitions, which I always do in the mildest

* This is probably the writer's brother, the Rev. Richard Raikes.

and gentlest manner. The going among them, doing them little kindnesses, distributing trifling rewards, and ingratiating myself with them, I hear, have given me an ascendancy greater than I ever could have imagined; for I am told by their mistresses that they are very much afraid of my displeasure. If you ever pass through Gloucester, I shall be happy to pay my respects to you and to show you the effects of this effort at civilisation. If the glory of God be promoted in any, even the smallest degree, society must reap some benefit. If good seed be sown in the mind at an early period of human life, though it shews itself not again for many years, it may please God, at some future period, to cause it to spring up, and to bring forth a plenteous harvest.

'With regard to the rules adopted, I only require that they come to the school on Sunday as clean as possible. Many were at first deterred because they wanted decent clothing, but I could not undertake to supply this defect. I argue, therefore, if you can loiter about without shoes, and in a ragged coat, you may as well come to school and learn what may tend to your good in that garb. I reject none on that footing. All that I require are clean hands, clean face, and the hair combed; if you have no clean shirt, come in that which you have on.

'The want of decent apparel at first kept great numbers at a distance, but they now begin to grow wiser, and all are pressing to learn. I have had the good luck to procure places for some that were deserving, which has been of

great use. You will understand that these children are from 6 years old to 12 or 14. Boys and girls above this age, who have been totally undisciplined, are generally too refractory for this government. A reformation in society seems to me only practicable by establishing notions of duty, and practical habits of order and decorum, at an early age. But whither am I running ? I am ashamed to see how much I have trespassed on your patience; but I thought the most complete idea of Sunday schools was to be conveyed to you by telling what first suggested the thought. The same sentiments would have arisen in your mind had they happened to have been called forth as they were suggested to me.

'I have no doubt that you will find great improvement to be made on this plan. The minds of men have taken great hold on that prejudice, that we are to do nothing on the Sabbath-day which may be deemed labour, and therefore we are to be excused from all application of mind as well as body. The rooting out of this prejudice is the point I aim at as my favourite object. Our Saviour takes particular pains to manifest, that whatever tended to promote the health and happiness of our fellow-creatures were sacrifices peculiarly acceptable on that day.

'I do not think I have written so long a letter for some years. But you will excuse me—my heart is warm in the cause. I think this is the kind of reformation most requisite in this kingdom. Let our patriots employ themselves

in rescuing their countrymen from that despotism which tyrannical passions and vicious inclinations exercise over them, and they will find that true liberty and national welfare are more essentially promoted than by any reform in Parliament.

'As often as I have attempted to conclude some new idea has arisen. This is strange, as I am writing to a person whom I never have, and, perhaps, never may see—but I have felt that we think alike. I shall, therefore, only add my ardent wishes, that your views of promoting the happiness of society may be attended with every possible success, conscious that your own internal enjoyment will thereby be considerably advanced.'

Chapter Seven

RAIKES IMPROVES HIS PLAN

LIKE a snowball that grows in size as it rolls, the interest in Sunday schools, started by Raikes's note in the *Gloucester Journal*, soon increased enormously. Apparently Colonel Tornley acted at once on the information he secured from Raikes, for Sunday schools were soon established in Sheffield.

No further reference was made to Sunday schools in the *Journal* itself for some months, but in May, 1784, Raikes penned a further article on the subject, part of which we quote, because it shows not only the remarkable growth of the movement, but the modesty of the pioneer in regard to it.

'The good effects of Sunday schools established in this city are instanced in the account given by the principal persons in the pin and sack manufactories, wherein great reformation has taken place among the multitudes whom they employ. From being idle, ungovernable, profligate, and filthy in the extreme, they say the boys and girls are become not only cleanly and decent in their appearance, but are greatly humanised in their manners—more orderly, tractable, attentive to business, and, of course, more serviceable than they ever expected to find them. The cursing and swearing and other vile expressions, which used to form the sum of their conversation, are now rarely heard among them.

'Such we are well assured, is the fact. The *London Chronicle* of Tuesday last mentions that the plan of Sunday schools is taken up with such general concurrence in Leeds and Yorkshire that the spirited inhabitants of that place have them in all quarters of their populous town, and have already admitted near 2,000 poor children!'

Colonel Townley proved the first of many correspondents, and Raikes soon found himself kept busy with Sunday school enquiries. Influential people wrote from London, Bradford, Leeds, and other centres, seeking information on certain points. In a letter he sent to Bradford, dated June 5th, 1784, fresh light was thrown upon the early fruits of the movement.

'This mode of treatment has produced a wonderful change in the manners of these little savages. I cannot give a more striking instance than I received the other day from Mr. Church, a considerable manufacturer of hemp and flax, who employs great numbers of these children. I asked him whether he perceived any alteration in the poor children he employed. "Sir," said he, "the change could not have been more extraordinary, in my opinion, had they been transformed from the shape of wolves and tigers to that of men. In temper, disposition, and manners, they could hardly be said to differ from the brute creation; but since the establishment of the Sunday schools, they have seemed anxious to shew that they are not the ignorant, illiterate creatures they were before. When they have seen a superior come and

kindly instruct and admonish them, and sometimes reward their good behaviour, they are anxious to gain his friendship and good opinion. They are also become more tractable and obedient, and less quarrelsome and revengeful. In short, I never conceived that a reformation so singular could have been effected amongst the set of untutored beings I employ.

'From this little sketch of the reformation which has taken place, there is reason to hope that a general establishment of Sunday Schools would, in time, make some change in the morals of the lower class. At least, it might in some measure prevent them from growing worse, which at present seems but too apparent.

'The parish of St. Nicholas has lately established two schools, and some gentlemen in this city have also set up others. To some of the school-mistresses I give two shillings a week extra to take the children when they come from work, during the week days.'

In July of that year a London merchant, William Fox, began a correspondence with Raikes that was to have great consequences. Fox sought advice from the pioneer for the starting of a Sunday School Society in London. This is important, because it shows that within twelve months of the public launching of the movement, a representative body of influential people was formed at the capital to promote Sunday school work. This proved the forerunner of the Sunday School Union. Among the distinguished men of that time who were interested by William Fox in promoting the

Sunday School Society in London were Jonas Hanway, the famous Persian explorer, Mr. Henry Thornton, a director of the Bank of England, Samuel Hoare, the banker, and William Wilberforce.

A preliminary meeting of interested people was held at the King's Head Tavern in the Poultry (near the London Mansion House), when it was decided to form ' A Society for the establishment and support of Sunday schools, throughout the Kingdom of Great Britain.' A Committee was elected to launch the Society, and a public meeting was called at the Paul's Head Tavern, in Cateaton Street. Circular letters were sent out to likely people by William Fox, urging the favour of attendance at the meeting, and the aim of the new movement was summarised thus :

' To prevent vice—to encourage industry and virtue—to dispel the darkness of ignorance—to diffuse the light of knowledge—to bring men cheerfully to submit to their station—to obey the laws of God and their country—to make that useful part of the cummunity, the country poor, happy—to lead them in the pleasant paths of religion here—and to endeavour to prepare them for glorious eternity—are the objects proposed by the promoters of this institution.'

Robert Raikes had a brother, Thomas, who was the Governor of the Bank of England, and Fox tried to get Thomas Raikes to preside at this public meeting, but, unfortunately, he was going out of town. Meanwhile Thomas Raikes sent a copy of Fox's circular letter to his brother

Robert. The pioneer's joy knew no bounds when he heard that his modest experiment was making such extraordinary progress that a national society was on the eve of formation in London. Travel being slow and tedious in those days, it was impossible for Raikes to attend the meeting in person. Instead he wrote a letter to Fox which made an important contribution to the discussion. As this document gives further evidence of the quick development of the movement, and an account of what must have been the first Sunday School Anniversary, it is of great interest.

'My brother, T. Raikes, enclosed to me yesterday, a circular letter he had received with your signature, which has given me more pleasure than I can express. I observe by that letter, that you are to hold a meeting to-morrow. I regret that I am not situated near enough to attend it, but, as I was present yesterday se'nnight at a meeting, which is intended to be established as an anniversary, at Mitchel Dean, a little town in this county, on the verge of the Forest of Dean, it occurred to me that a sketch of the pleasing scene I there beheld, may not be improperly laid before the gentlemen who attend your summons to the Paul's Head Tavern.

'Maynard Colchester, and William Lane, Esqrs., two gentlemen of property in the neighbourhood, having heard of the happy effects arising from an attention to the morals of the rising generation of the poor, determined to try what could be done among the little lawless

rabble, which inhabit the borders of the Forest near Mitchel Dean. About Christmas last, they established two schools, and admitted about fifty or sixty scholars of both sexes; some of them the most ignorant uncivilised beings in the country. Ten or twelve of the respectable inhabitants of the town engaged to subscribe; but what was of greater moment, they took upon themselves the superintendence of the establishment; and to their zeal may be ascribed, under the Divine blessing, its success.

'The promoters of the undertaking did me the honour to invite me to dine with them on their Anniversary, to witness the progress that had been made in this effort at civilisation. The children, though many of them in apparel very ragged, were extremely clean. They walked in great order, two and two, to the church, where they were placed in a gallery, exposed to the view of the whole congregation; and their behaviour, during the service, was perfectly silent and becoming. In the repetition of the Lord's Prayer, they all joined, and formed a charm that made every heart dilate with joy. The clergyman of the parish, a curate of £26 a year, gave an admirable discourse from Mark 4: 28. This valuable young man had taken great pains in admonishing the children, and impressing them with due notions, how greatly their own happiness would be increased, by introducing into their general behaviour, habits of quietness and good nature to one another. The tenor of argument in his discourse was to prove, that if good seed be sown in the moral,

as in the natural world, a plentiful harvest was no less to be hoped for, but that we must look for it in the same order; it might be some time before it made its appearance—and then by small beginnings—first the blade, etc.

'After church the children were conducted to the inn, where an examination took place of the progress made in reading. I was highly pleased to see the proficiency some of them had made. Several could read in the New Testament, and I found among them two or three with extraordinary memories. They have learned to repeat several chapters.

'Nearly fifty of them were perfect in their Catechism, and all could repeat some of Dr. Watts's hymns. The children were so much pleased with those pieces, that two or three of them could repeat the whole book. But what pleased me most of all was the result of my inquiry into the effect upon their manners. "That boy," said one of the gentlemen (pointing to a very ill-looking lad, about thirteen) "was the most profligate young dog in this neighbourhood. He was the leader of every kind of mischief and wickedness. He never opened his lips without a profane or indecent expression. And now he is become orderly and good-natured, and in his conversation has quite left off profaneness.

'After dinner, the gentlemen called in six boys who had previously been taught a hymn, which, I can assure you, they sang to admiration. I observed that one of the singers was the boy before mentioned. The silence that prevailed among these children was remarkable:

their benefactors dined in a room adjoining, but were not disturbed with their talking.

'I have given you this little recital, and if it tends to prove the practicability of doing good to our fellow-creatures, I hope it may prove an incitement to the work you are bringing forward.'

Fox was able to report to Raikes soon afterwards, that on the 7th September, 1785, 'The Society for the Support and Encouragement of Sunday Schools' had been formed in London. In a prophetic vein, Fox added:

'The fire which you have had the honour to light up in Gloucester having now reached the Metropolis, will, I trust, never be extinguished but with the ignorance of every individual throughout the kingdom.'

The first act of the Sunday School Society was to send a letter to the ministers and clergy of all denominations, calling attention to the new movement and its beneficial effects, and urging the setting up of Sunday schools everywhere. A 'plan for the organisation of a school' was offered for general distribution with this letter, and shows the energy and efficiency of this first Sunday School Union, in which Anglicans and Nonconformists worked shoulder to shoulder.

Whilst the formation of Sunday schools was spreading apace to almost every part of England, Raikes was quietly improving his 'botanising' in Gloucester, with marked results. His insistence upon personal cleanliness and neatness in appearance made it possible to pick out the Sunday scholars from other children in the town.

When the girls responded to Raikes's efforts to secure clean faces and well-combed hair, he went a stage further with them. He provided them with bonnets to wear on Sundays. These bonnets were 'formed of a pasteboard front, and a kind of cap caul' and were made of white linen with black strings. They were doubtless provided because the poor little urchins had no hats of any sort, and the directions of the apostle Paul that women should have their heads covered in church, would drive Raikes to adopt this expedient before he could take his girl scholars to the afternoon service in St. Mary de Crypt Church.

The method of using elder scholars as helpers in Sunday schools is older than many people think, for it was a feature introduced by Raikes himself at Gloucester. According to a letter he wrote in 1787, the pioneer was very modern, if not graded, in his methods, for we find the following references to the organisation of the school, its relation to the minister, the attendance of the scholars at church, etc.

'The hour of assembly on Sunday mornings prescribed in our rules is eight o'clock, but it is usually half after eight before our flock is collected. Twenty is the number allotted to each teacher; the sexes kept separate. The twenty are divided into four classes; the children who show any superiority in attainments are placed as leaders of these small classes, and are employed in teaching the others their letters, or in hearing them read in a low whisper, which may be done without interrupt-

ing the master or mistress in their business, and will keep the attention of the children engaged, that they do not play or make a noise.

'Their attending the service of the church once a day has to me seemed sufficient; for their time may be spent more profitably, perhaps, in receiving instruction than in being present at a long discourse, which their minds are not yet able to comprehend; but people may think differently on this point.

'Within this month the minister of my parish has, at last, condescended to give me assistance in this laborious work, which I have carried on six years with little or no support. He chooses that the children should come to church both morning and afternoon. I brought them to church only in the afternoon. If this should answer better than my plan, on some future occasion I will let you or Mr. H. know it.

'The stipend to the teachers here is a shilling each Sunday; but we provide the firing, and bestow gratuities as rewards of diligence, which may make it worth sixpence more.'

Not only was Raikes ahead of his time in his ideas, but he had marked gifts as a teacher. Some of his methods were identical with those that are denounced by older Sunday school workers to-day as 'new-fangled.' For instance, he believed in the story-method of teaching. Writing to a Welsh correspondent, in 1792, he said:

'My children, last Sunday, told me that they were sorry when the time came that I was to leave them. The subject of my conversation

with them was the history of Joseph. It occurred in the lesson for the day. I brought it down to a level with their conditions, with Joseph as a poor boy like one of them. You would have been agreeably struck with the fixed attention of their little minds. I dare say many went home and told the story to their parents.'

Raikes practised eye-teaching as well as the oral method. On one occasion he produced some needles and a large magnet from his pocket, to illustrate the invisible power of goodness to draw us away from evil. For this purpose he held his magnet sufficiently near some of the needles to draw them away from the others. The children watched this marvel with breathless interest. Says Raikes:

'They see the magnet draw the needle without touching it. Thus, I tell them, I wish to draw them to the paths of duty, and thus lead them to Heaven and happiness; and as they saw one needle, when it touched the magnet, then capable of drawing another needle, thus when they became good they would be made the instruments in the hands of God, very probably, of making other boys good.

'Upon this idea those children are now endeavouring to bring other children to meet me at church, and you would be diverted to see with what a group I am surrounded every morning at seven o'clock prayers at the cathedral, especially upon a Sunday morning, at which time I give books, or combs, or other encouragements.

'Sometimes they read to me a part of the

Gospel for the day, which I explain in a manner suited and applied to their own situations and comprehensions. They were reading that verse in St. Luke, the other morning, where our Saviour says: "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation. The Kingdom of God is within you." Who can tell me, says I, what we are to understand by that expression—"The Kingdom of God is within you?" They were all silent for some minutes. At last the boy who was reading said: "I believe it means when the Spirit of God is in our hearts."

'Don't you think this is encouragement to cultivate the lower orders of the people? I could recount to you numberless incidents of this nature that occur to me, to render my scheme of botanising in human nature pleasant and agreeable.'

It must be remembered that results of this kind, which Raikes was so proud to report, would seem incredible to many people in an age when it was a *sine qua non* that the 'vulgar' had no mentality and were incapable of education.

Raikes always carried with him an old-fashioned reading glass; doubtless he used it to magnify small print during his work at the office. Many of the children were afraid of this glass, and Raikes used it most effectively for the purpose of discipline. Sometimes when a boy was brought to him for disobedience, he would put the glass to his eye and say sternly: 'Ah, I can see you did not say your prayers this morning.'

Many of the boys believed that he could see

through stone walls with that glass, and was able to read the guilty secrets hidden away in their hearts. The fact that it magnified his own eye, when he looked at them through it, heightened their fear, and made the most fantastic stories of its magic seem feasible.

Considerable improvements are traceable as the schools progressed. The rowdyism and uproar of early days, with the consequent stern—and to us, brutal—forms of punishment, dropped into desuetude. It appears to have been sufficient for the teachers to threaten to report bad behaviour to Raikes. The scholars evidently had a wholesome fear of him, mixed with respect, and, in some cases, with affection.

As time passed, the more definitely religious part of Sunday school work was developed. Raikes found that the time spent with the children on Sundays, even though it occupied most of the day, meant very slow progress in religious subjects when the rudiments of reading and writing had to be taught. He therefore appealed to the parents for their help, and opened the schools at certain times during the week-day, notably during the dinner hour and after the factories had closed in the early evening, for these secular subjects. He mentions engaging a teacher at a shilling a week for giving lessons at such odd times to the Sunday scholars.

He also took advantage of the fact that he was a printer, and made use of his business to further the work of the Sunday school. He printed A.B.C. books and simple readers to help the scholars to master the art of reading. One-

syllable reading cards were in great demand for this purpose. He printed rules for his scholars to observe, and directions for the guidance of his teachers. The former provided for personal cleanliness, and were specially directed against cursing and swearing in church. He printed a *Sunday Scholars' Companion* that was widely circulated; its scope may be indicated by the lengthy sub-title—a feature of books of that period: '*The Sunday Scholars' Companion;* consisting of Scripture Sentences disposed in such order as will quickly ground Young Learners in the fundamental doctrines of our most Holy Religion, and at the same time lead them pleasantly on from simple and easy to compound and difficult words.'

The first half of the book consists of alphabet tables, lists of short words, and short sentences arranged into lessons, beginning with sentences of words of one syllable, and advancing to more difficult exercises. Some of the latter were taken from the Church Catechism, and some were extracts from Dr. Watts's 'Advice to Children Concerning Prayer,' in which the scholars were warned against 'the shamefully lazy and disrespectful custom of repeating their prayers in bed.'

In the 'first lesson' of Part I. of this old book we have the beginning of Sunday school teaching, and so we quote it in full:

First Lesson:

God is one.
God is love.

The Lord is good to all.
A God of Peace.
A God of Truth.
The Lord of Hosts is His Name.
The God of the whole earth.
O Lord, there is none like Thee.

Each of these lessons contained an average of ten simple sentences. The subjects were skilfully classified, so that when the end of the series was reached, it presented a fairly complete outline of the theology of the period, but it was more ethical than dogmatic, and more loving than punitive.

The lessons in Parts II., III., and IV. of the *Companion* consisted of selected passages from the Old and New Testaments, and set forth man's duty towards God and his neighbour. Proverbs abounded, but there was very little history.

The Sunday School Society had, by this time, issued primers and hymn books, Bibles and Testaments at low rates, and sometimes gratuitously. Mr. Jonas Hanway, one of the founders, compiled an elementary book under the title of '*A Copious School Book*, for the use of Sunday Scholars under the good care of Parents, Masters, and Mistresses'; and also '*A Comprehensive Sentimental Book;* for Scholars learning in Sunday Schools, containing the Alphabet, Numbers, Spelling, Moral and Religious Lessons, Lectures, Stories and Prayers, suited to the growing Powers of Children.'

Chapter Eight

WALKING ALONE!

WHILE Raikes was improving and extending his efforts at ' botanising in human nature,' his everyday work of printer was by no means neglected. Under his editorship, the *Gloucester Journal* was improved and enlarged, and its influence as one of the best examples of provincial journalism of the day slowly increased.

Raikes had a large family—in his own language, ' six excellent girls and two lovely boys.' He now moved out of the house in Southgate Street, that had from his father's days combined a residence with the house of business, and took ' a large house in Bell Lane of a good type, with a green lawn surrounding it.' This house was near his business, and it is typical of the man that he kept the footway, between one door and the other swept and garnished at his own expense.

Although he never took any public part in the life of Gloucester, Raikes was evidently one of its most prosperous citizens, and lived up to that position. He kept company ' of the best sort,' and had a handsome service of plate marked with the Raikes crest—a griffin's head.

In John Nichols, of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, Raikes still found a most enthusiastic and able champion. From time to time Nichols wrote about the steadily growing success of the Sunday school experiment. He was a stout believer in

Raikes's social reform policy of education for the people, and in the then almost unbelievable possibility of 'raising up among the lowest of the people a new race.'

It was the power of the Press, used on behalf of Sunday schools in the *Gloucester Journal* and *Gentleman's Magazine*, that turned Raikes's botanising experiments into a national movement. He was able to prove, in an incredibly short time, that this scheme for converting the slag and refuse of industrial life into good and serviceable steel was sound.

Through this publicity, Hannah More, Mrs. Trimmer, Fanny Burney, John Howard, William Wilberforce, the Wesleys, and other distinguished people of the time became actively interested in Sunday schools and their founder. Some of these national figures even found their way to Gloucester, and were the guests of Raikes in Bell Lane. In 1784, a group of distinguished Frenchmen, members of the French Academy, visited Gloucester to see the Sunday schools, and were entertained by Raikes in his home. It was at this stage that it must have been a real advantage to the movement that the pioneer was elegant in dress, stylish in manner, and kept a well-ordered establishment.

Yet neither his prison work nor his efforts to improve the children of Gloucester by promoting Sunday schools brought him much distinction in his native city. Sharing the experiment of a long line of benefactors, Raikes—like the Greatest of all—had 'no honour in his own city.' Even after he had thus become a national figure,

he attracted little attention in Gloucester, and was chiefly remembered afterwards by his elegant clothes and stylish manner, which was called 'swagger' and 'pompousness.' That by his benevolence he had saved many a poor debtor from starvation in the gaol was forgotten; instead, people remembered that he had a massive gold snuff-box for dress occasions, and 'snuffed with elegance.' The curate of his parish was said to have known him well, for he dined frequently with the Raikes family, but apparently he gave little help in the Sunday school. He said afterwards: 'An excessive vanity was the predominant feature in Mr. Raikes's character.'

Whatever they thought of his fad for visiting the gaols or slumming in Sooty Alley, the leading people in Gloucester were quite ready to be on visiting terms with Buck Raikes. The pioneer dined occasionally at the bishop's palace, but whether this was in the capacity of an influential layman attached to one of the parish churches, or as editor and proprietor of the *Journal*, or as the pioneer of Sunday schools, is not revealed. But he received little support from the Church in Gloucester for his work, and it seems as though his human botanising was largely ignored. 'I had been working for six years before the vicar of the parish condescended to give me any assistance in it,' he writes in one letter.

Thus Raikes did not escape the loneliness and opposition that is the lot of the pioneer in every age. The snobbish and smug attitude of mind

that regarded the poor as a lower order of creation, who ought to be 'satisfied with the station in life to which God had been pleased to call them'—did not take kindly to the democratic policy of men like Raikes and Nichols. Those who affected to believe that God has ordained some men to be booted and spurred and others to be saddled and bridled, were indignant and alarmed at the suggestion that the vulgar masses were capable of education and improvement. The terrors of the French Revolution, and the revolt against the aristocracy and educated classes by the proletariat of France, reacted against the work of Raikes and others in England. It was believed that the masses could only be kept in their place and content with their wretched lot, while they remained ignorant; so agitators took care to prejudice the people against the efforts of their benefactors. Apparently 'the man of Gloucester' had been too long at work for active opposition to be successful in that city, but when his friend, Mrs. Hannah More, tried to form a Sunday school in the Cheddar district, the parents would not allow their children to attend. Mrs. More was rumoured to be seeking the children 'in order to send them beyond the seas, and sell them as slaves in the West Indies.' In their ignorance the common people could not understand any disinterested person spending time and trouble on their behalf, and therefore the monstrous rumours, that were industriously circulated by interested people, as to the selfish object behind such efforts were

readily believed. 'Religion will neither fill our bellies nor clothe our backs,' the people said, 'and as to reading, it only serves to make poor folks proud and idle.'

Little wonder, then, that the pioneer complains to a correspondent that he seemed to be walking alone, and that 'I can prevail on no one to second me in my little efforts to civilise the long-despised and neglected children of indigence.'

Such opposition developed to the new movement that John Nichols was compelled, in the interests of fair play and a free press, to admit to the columns of the *Gentleman's Magazine* an article that voiced the general criticism of the new movement. 'An Old and Respectable Correspondent' attacked Raikes's attempt to educate the poor, because 'it would unfit them for menial service, raise discontent, and foment rebellion,' and concluded his diatribe thus:

'We may, therefore, conclude that the Sunday school is so far from being the wise, useful, or prudential institution (it is said to be) that it is in reality productive of no valuable advantage. On the contrary, it is subversive of that order, industry, peace and tranquility which constitutes the happiness of society; and, so far from deserving encouragement and applause, it merits our contempt, and ought to be exploded as the vain chimerical institution of a visionary projector.'

Some of Raikes's opponents were not at all scrupulous in their methods. It was widely declared that the Bishop of Rochester had

denounced Sunday schools in the House of Lords. So much capital was made out of this rumour that his lordship made an emphatic public disavowal, and confounded the critics by speaking strongly in favour of the movement.

Some of the strongest opposition came from Scotland, of all places, where Sunday schools were denounced as being not only unnecessary, but harmful, inasmuch as their formation would cast a serious reflection upon the clergy and the parents, who were quite capable of imparting the necessary religious instruction to the children. ' They will in the end destroy all family religion, and are hurtful to public religion,' declared a well-known minister.

Although he felt terribly lonely at times, no amount of opposition could deflect him from his purpose. Neither did the unpopularity of the movement make him give up its advocacy in the *Gloucester Journal* through fear of damaging the interests of that paper. Continually he preached that the best method of prison reform was to prevent criminals being made.

Some of his little homilies on the need for religious education show a remarkable knowledge of what we should call child psychology, and prove how close and accurate an observer of children he was.

He noted among other things that (i.) " vice " in a child is only an imitation of familiar sights and sounds ; (ii.) there is a time in the child's life when it is innocent ; and during that time the faculties are active and receptive ; (iii.) good seed cannot be planted too early ; (iv.)

the child will take pleasure in being good, if goodness is only made attractive.

'Persons are mistaken who consider the lower orders of mankind incapable of improvement, and therefore think that an attempt to reclaim them is impracticable; or, at least, not worth the trouble,' he wrote after making his experiments. He then proceeded to demonstrate that among these despised children of the poor he had found a capacity for improvement, a desire for improvement, a strong memory, good imagination, and a love of cleanliness and order.

By his experience, Raikes was satisfied on two important points: (a) That the Sunday school could be made the instrument, under God, of educating the poorest children, and of awakening a spiritual life within them; (b) That the Sunday school, supplemented by day and evening classes, would form the basis of national education.

His opinion never changed on these two points. His design, from the first, was the 'levelling up' of the masses by means of education; and it is noteworthy that the first to appreciate his efforts were women. He wrote:

'To one of my teachers who lives in the worst part of our suburbs I allow two shillings a week extra (besides the shilling I give her for the Sunday employ) to let all that are willing to come (on week days) and read in this manner. I see admirable effects from this addition to my scheme (the Sunday school). I find mothers of the children and grown-up young women have

begged to be admitted to partake of this benefit. Sorry I am to say that none of the other sex have shown the same desire.'

In all that affected the life of the slum child his 'heart was warm,' to use his own striking phrase. He took no narrow view of either the Sunday school or its function. He records that 'on the day after Christmas Day, 1785, a bountiful dinner of beef, pudding, and potatoes was given to the children, 350 in number, attending the Painswick schools, the donors of the feast themselves officiating as carvers and waiters.' To show how welcome this feast must have been, he adds:

'When the meal was set before one boy it was observed that he could not eat. He was asked the reason, and the poor wretch said that it was three days since he had had any food, and his stomach was gone. However, by taking a little, his appetite at last returned. Another was asked if he had eaten so plentiful a meal this twelve-months. "No, nor these three twelve-months," replied the boy.'

At one of the Sunday schools the children were encouraged to provide themselves with clothing by subscribing to the school clothing club. Each scholar brought a penny weekly, and as his name was called dropped it into a box. At the end of the year the total sum thus raised amounted to £36, and this was materially increased by contributions from generous people, and a considerable sum was expended in clothing for the children. This plan, it was found, promoted a healthy spirit of self-reliance

among the scholars, each one priding himself upon having contributed towards the cost of his own garments.

'Such is the emulation to make a neat appearance on Sundays,' wrote one of Raikes's correspondents, 'that shoes and buckles are now cleaned by those who formerly had none to wear. To a gentleman who expressed his surprise at seeing a boy so well clad, the lad replied: "Oh, sir, I paid three shillings towards it myself." "There is another poor boy all in rags," replied the gentleman, "why are you so much better clothed than he is?" "He does not belong to our parish," said the well-clad boy. "We have none so ragged in our parish. He belongs to —— where no care is taken of poor boys. More regard is paid to hogs there than to the children of the poor; the former are well looked after and have their bellies filled, which is not the case with the boys: they are almost starved."'

Not only did clothing clubs develop in the early days of the Sunday school movement, but other educational experiments were made that sound very familiar in our ears to-day. Connected with some of the early schools were institutions called "Schools of Industry," for week-day instruction in the industrial arts. At Bath, it is recorded that the School of Industry contained 180 children, selected from the Sunday schools of the city, and employed as follows: 'Thirty little boys to knit stockings and garters; thirty boys and girls to spin wool for cloth and worsted; thirty girls to spin flax for linen;

and thirty girls to sew, make the linen, clothes, etc. The boys were clad in coats and waistcoats of olive-coloured serge, leather breeches, and serge caps with the words "Reward of Industry" round them. The girls wore jackets and petticoats of serge, and linen tippets and caps, also bearing the inscription "Reward of Industry" in worsted. All the children were taught to read and attend Sunday schools. The elder girls were trained to discharge the household duties of the establishment, with a view to making them good domestic servants.'

By this time the new movement had reached the United States, a Sunday school having been established in 1786 in Hanover County, Virginia. Other schools were started soon afterwards, and in 1791 a Sunday School Society was formed at Philadelphia; it was soon proved that this democratic institution was to thrive on American soil.

Chapter Nine

THE SPREAD OF 'BOTANISING'

AFTER 1785, Raikes could no longer say that as a pioneer he walked alone. Nothing succeeds like success, and when the streets of Gloucester were completely transformed through the activity of the Sunday schools, some distinguished people were ready to help in improving their work. The Earl of Ducie became one of the members of a Sunday school board of management for five of Raikes's schools in Gloucester, and sixteen rules were drawn up by the board for the good conduct of the schools.

By this time, too, there is clear evidence in the *Gloucester Journal* that schools had been established extensively in many parts of England. In consequence it was possible to show some definite good results from their work, so their extension was urged by many leaders of the Church. The Bishop of Chester, among others, wrote to every clergyman in his diocese urging the formation of Sunday schools, and giving directions for their conduct. John Wesley directed his followers to start schools, stating: 'It seems these will be one of the great means of reviving religion throughout the nation. I wonder Satan has not yet sent out some able champion against them.'

The columns of the *Gloucester Journal* were made the vehicle for chronicling donations, the

formation of fresh charities, the creation of new trusts and trustees, and the opening of new schools—Sunday, day, or industrial—throughout the kingdom. Here are extracts taken at random :

'The parish of St. James and St. Paul, in the city of Bristol, exhibited on Monday last 450 children rescued from idleness, filthiness, and vice, and trained up in habits of industry and good order. This is an experiment to show how far prevention of crimes is preferable to punishment.'

'A sermon was preached at Manchester, in the Methodist Chapel, by the Rev. Dr. Coke, for the benefit of Sunday schools for the children of all denominations, and £100 3s. 10d. was collected. . . . At Tetbury the collection amounted to £73 4s. 3d., and it was thought that, if some of the principal inhabitants had not been gone from home, it would have been more.'

'The inhabitants of Great Malvern gave the Sunday school children a dinner of roast beef and potatoes, plum pudding and cyder.'

'Donations of £300 East India Stock have been given to the parish of Painswick in support of Sunday schools, and a like sum in like stock in support of day and industrial schools.'

The Sunday School Society in London, finding that the most serious obstacle to the multiplying of the schools was the expense of paying the teachers, directed its efforts to collecting subscriptions for this purpose. In fourteen years (from 1786 to 1800) the Society paid out £4,000 for teachers' fees, and as the standard rate of

pay was 1s. 6d. per Sunday, it is clear that the movement had become well-established by this time.

Although Raikes still had to depend on a few paid teachers in his schools, he looked forward to the time when all the workers would be purely voluntary. He persuaded two of his daughters to teach the girls in his own Sunday school. This was a notable triumph, for in those days a great gulf was fixed between the children of the vulgar and their betters, especially of the feminine gender. Thus one of the old ladies, who in 1863 could remember going as a girl to Raikes's school in Southgate Street, said: 'I was one of fifty or more girls, and we had lady teachers—real ladies. Two of them were Mr. Raikes's own daughters. It was a rare thing for a real lady to teach vulgar children then. I fancy they came by way of encouragement to poor people's children, who could pick up nice ways by imitating them.'

These features clearly indicate that the Sunday school was making headway in public estimation, as the results were seen to be so marked in improving and uplifting the children of the neglected poor.

No record can be traced of when and where the first unpaid teachers began Sunday school work, but their appearance altered the whole position and outlook. Coming solely from religious motives, these voluntary teachers lifted the movement to a new and better plane. Teachers who, good enough in their way, had taken up the work merely as a way of supple-

menting their earnings, gradually dropped out, and turned their energies to night-schools, where the work was confined to teaching the three R's. In this way the character of Sunday schools was altered, and as a natural consequence, their future was assured. That the heart of 'the man of Gloucester' was uplifted by this spread of botanizing in human nature was natural. In 1787, 'Sylvanus Urban,' which thinly disguises the name of John Nichols, quotes, in the following way, from a private letter he had received from Robert Raikes:

'The truly benevolent Mr. Raikes, in a private letter to our printer, November 13th, 1787 (which his own good heart will pardon our thus divulging) after politely noticing the mention made of "his project for civilising the common people of this kindgom," and observing that "he has found the plan more widely dispersed by the *Gentleman's Magazine* than by any other publication," adds: "It is incredible with what rapidity this grain of mustard seed is extending its branches over the kingdom. The third of this month completes four years since I first mentioned the expediency of Sunday schools in the *Gloucester Journal*, and by the best information I am assured that the number of poor children, who were heretofore neglected as the wild asses' colt, but who are now taken to these little seminaries of instruction, amounts to 250,000. In the town of Newcastle alone the seminaries contain 5,000 children. It would delight you to observe the cheerfulness with which the children (in Gloucester) attend on the

Sunday. A woman told me last Sunday that her boy enquires of her every night whether he has done anything in the day that will furnish a complaint against him on Sunday. You see, sir, to what care and vigilance this may lead.'

Constant references to the good effects that followed the spread of the movement were made in the *Gentleman's Magazine :*

'The suppression of Sunday revels and wakes is becoming very general in this country. The establishment of Sunday schools, we also hear, is becoming very general. . . . The children of the poor, who were heretofore allowed to pass the Sunday in licentious idleness, are now engaged in acquiring a knowledge of their duty, and attending public worship. In the parish of Nympsfield, where there has been great improvement in the morals and habits of the children, Lady Ducie has recently given the school children a Sunday dinner of beef and pudding. Children who used to go about begging on Sundays of any stranger that came into the village, now go to church and behave themselves well.'

During this time, Raikes was busily visiting the Gloucester Sunday schools regularly, and publishing evidence in his *Journal* of the striking effects of this mild attempt to popularise education. Like many writers of to-day, he was very fond of using certain terms, and from this time onwards he talks of his 'seminaries.'

As he was accepted by most people of his day as the real founder of Sunday schools, clergymen and others who were contemplating the starting of schools wrote to Raikes for informa-

tion and guidance. From some of his letters that have been preserved, we get glimpses of the progress made in Gloucester.

'I have two clergymen engaged with me in an effort to raise up a new race among the lowest of the people, taught at an early period the happiness of thinking on that which is good, and bringing those thoughts into action in the several duties that Christianity enjoins. We consider it as an experiment how far it be practicable to lead mankind, by slow and gentle steps, to the comforts and peace that good morals supply, and thereby render those a blessing who have hitherto been a scandal to the community.'

'If the higher orders of society would seek this true and exalted pleasure, they would find it more readily in promoting the glory of their Creator, than in sacrificing to those idols that sensuality has set up. Let them go about doing good, as He whose example we ought to imitate. Let them visit the mansions of ignorance and vice, and hold forth light to men that sit in darkness, and lead them to the knowledge of Him that is invisible, but who may be plainly seen in the work of His hands and the dispensation of His providence.'

In another letter appears an account of an address which he himself gave to the children in a Sunday school: 'I had, some time ago, been exerting my feeble powers to convey some ideas of this kind to some poor children at the opening of a Sunday school in a village in this neighbourhood, where, till then, the poor had

been entirely neglected ; and a little boy, who had listened attentively to my conversation, went home to his mother (as I was afterwards informed) and asked her whether that gentleman had not been at Heaven ? The simplicity of the question diverted me very much when I heard it. It showed, however, that the boy's mind had been strongly impressed.'

In another letter he writes : " It would please me to show you my flock, and I think it would divert you to see the pleasure we take in each other's company. Instead of running out of church as though released from a situation of the most painful restraint, you will see them waiting for my leaving my seat, and then crowding around me as though I had loaves and fishes to distribute." '

Honour now came to Robert Raikes from the metropolis, where the Sunday School Society, forerunner of the Sunday School Union, passed the following resolution at a general meeting held in 1787 :—

' Resolved, unanimously, that in consideration of the zeal and merits of Robert Raikes, Esq., of Gloucester, who may be considered as the original founder, as well as liberal promoter of Sunday schools, he be admitted an honorary member of this Society.'

In the following year the Queen (Queen Charlotte), while at Windsor, sent for Raikes—who was visiting some relatives in the town—in order to hear from his own lips ' by what accident a thought which promised so much benefit to the lower orders of the people as the

institution of Sunday schools, was suggested to his mind, and what effects were observed in consequence on the manners of the poor.'

For over an hour Raikes basked in the royal presence, and talked about his botanising in human nature. He does not appear to have had his head turned by this royal patronage, for in a letter to a friend at the time, he said :

'Her Majesty most graciously said that she envied those who had the power of doing good by thus personally promoting the welfare of society in giving instruction and morality to the general masses of the common people, a pleasure from which by her position she was debarred.'

Perhaps as a result of his talk to the Queen, King George (III) paid a visit to the Sunday schools at Brentford, and was so pleased with all he saw and heard that he uttered the wish that 'every poor child in my kingdom should be taught to read the Bible.'

The Duke of Gloucester, whilst quartered with his regiment in the city, was a guest in Raikes's house, and we can be sure that Sunday schools were mentioned. We also discover, from an oblique reference in one of the pioneer's private letters, that the Empress of Russia, hearing of his plan, invited him to visit that country in connection with it. Had Raikes been the vainglorious fame-seeker that some of his critics have made him out to be, it is perfectly certain that, through his connection with the press, he could have had this invitation from Russia blazoned forth in the Society journals of

his day. Instead, it was never placed on direct record.

Raikes was quite unspoilt by his growing fame, as the following delightful reminiscence of a former office-boy shows :

' I was about the house a good deal. Mr. Raikes was a good liberal master and kept his servants a good while. He paid good wages, and no family in Gloucester had more company than the Raikeses. I used sometimes to help the footman clean the plate in the butler's pantry. There was no regular butler, but extra servants were employed on occasion. Mrs. Raikes was never happy unless her house was full of company. She was very " pettish," but very good, and had her own way ; but she kept the maids a long time, and she was very charitable. We all knew she was a lady—an admiral's sister.

' I knew most about Mr. Raikes. Mrs. Raikes took no part in the Sunday schools, but I never heard her object to the poor children coming on to the lawn, when they lived in Bell Lane, and into Mr. Raikes's room ; and she would send pieces of cake in for them. I believe he liked to have children about him, and he'd get them to sing on the lawn.

' He had a nice way about him with children. I was in the office one day, before the fire, making paste. Mr. Raikes came in and said to me : " James, are you a good boy ? " I said, " Yes, sir." He then put half a guinea in my hand, and said that was for a Christmas box for being a good boy.'

Although Raikes had recognised for many years that prevention is better than cure, he did not abandon his benevolent activity on behalf of the prisoners of Gloucester. Backed up by John Howard, and with the help of the prison governor, Sir G. O. Paul, he secured much better conditions for the prisoners. This, combined with his educational work, bore such good fruit that in 1792 he was able to write to a Sunday school correspondent:

'I have some satisfaction in acquainting you that the state of the county is so much improved by the late regulations, and the attention to the improvement of morals among the common people, that we have not for the whole county one culprit to hold up his hand at the Bar at the next Assizes—a circumstance that the history of this county could never before record. The number about ten years ago was from 50 to 100 that we usually tried. That was the period when Providence was pleased to make me the instrument of introducing Sunday schools, and regulations in prisons.'

A few years later the Sunday School Society in London took steps to extend the movement to the principality of Wales. The Rev. Thomas Charles, of Bala, had been led to establish the first Welsh Sunday school about 1785. The movement took a distinctive turn in the principality, inasmuch as adults as well as children became Sunday scholars, with far-reaching results.

In 1802 Raikes decided to retire from business, and the *Gloucester Journal* and its printing business was sold. Though the pioneer was now

sixty-seven years of age, it is doubtful whether he would have retired at that comparatively early age had not his interest in Sunday schools been so extensive. His botanising plan had, by this time, spread so far that it had become a truly national movement. Correspondence and callers came from all parts of the kingdom. For instance, James Kemp, a working shoemaker of Hoxton, having heard of Raikes's experiment for improving the ragamuffins of Gloucester, decided to try the same plan. 'Hoxton was then a suburban village, surrounded by fields in which neglected lads and girls watched dog-fights, prize-fights and bull-baiting on Sundays, no men caring for their souls until James Kemp heard of Robert Raikes's work in Gloucester, and determined to imitate it. He walked from London to Gloucester and back—220 miles—in order to interview Raikes, and was encouraged to go home and start a Sunday school, which had, in spite of many difficulties, remarkable results.'

This kind of caller must have seriously interfered with the direction of a large and growing business.

The picture we get of Raikes in his retirement is that of a happy old man, giving up his time to good works and taking an ever-increasing pride in the Sunday schools that, though he knew it not, would transmit his name to posterity. The children would come to his house, sing hymns on his lawn, and be catechised by him.

One day, Raikes invited some friends to breakfast at his own house. The window of the room in which the party assembled opened into

a small garden, and in this garden were seated, in rows one above the other, the neatly-dressed children of one of his Sunday schools. They were purposely exhibited to the breakfast party to excite interest in the movement, but a Quaker lady rebuked Mr. Raikes for this exhibition :

' Friend Raikes,' she said, ' when thou doest charitably, thy right hand should not know what thy left doeth.'

' The fair Quaker,' adds the historian, ' must have forgotten that there is another text, which says, " Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Raikes's relations to individual scholars can be judged by several interesting anecdotes, one of which is recorded in his own words :

' One day, as I was going to church, I overtook a soldier just entering the church door : this was on a week-day. As I passed him I said it gave me pleasure to see that he was going to a place of worship. " Ah, sir," said he, " I may thank you for that." " Me ? " said I. " Why, I don't know that I ever saw you before." " Sir," replied the soldier, " when I was a little boy I was indebted to you for my first instruction in my duty. I used to meet you at the morning service in this cathedral, and was one of your Sunday scholars. My father, when he left this city, took me into Berkshire, and put me apprentice to a shoemaker. I used often to think of you. At length I went to London, and was there drawn to serve as a militia man in the

Westminsters. I came to Gloucester last night with a deserter, and took the opportunity of coming this morning to visit the old spot, and in hope of once more seeing you."

'He then told me his name, and brought himself to my recollection by a curious circumstance which happened whilst he was at school. His father was a journeyman currier, a most vile, profligate man. After the boy had been some time at school, he came one day and told me that his father was wonderfully changed, and that he had left off going to the alehouse on a Sunday. It happened soon after that I met the man in the street, and said to him: "My friend, it gives me great pleasure to hear that you have left off going to the alehouse on the Sunday; your son tells me that you now stay at home and never get tipsy." He immediately replied that I had been the means of this change being produced. On my expressing surprise at this, on account of never having so much as spoken to him before, he replied, "No, sir, but the good instruction that you give my boy at the Sunday school he repeats to me; and this has so convinced me of the error of my former life as to have led to my present reformation." '

Nearly thirty years after the establishment of Raikes's first school, a young Quaker named Joseph Lancaster came to visit him in his retirement. At that time the founder of Sunday schools was seventy-two years of age, and past active work; but he still took a lively interest in his much-loved institution. Many were Lancaster's inquiries respecting the origin of

Sunday schools, and an interesting account has been preserved of one of Raikes's replies. Leaning on the arm of his visitor, the old man led the Quaker through the thoroughfares of Gloucester to the spot in a back street where the first school was held.

'Pause here,' said the old man. Uncovering his head, and closing his eyes, he stood for a moment in silent prayer, then turning towards his companion, while the tears rolled down his cheeks, he said:

'This is the spot on which I stood when I saw the destitution of the children and the desecration of the Sabbath by the inhabitants of the city. As I asked myself, can nothing be done, a voice answered, "TRY." I did try, and see what God has wrought. I can never pass by the spot where the word "try" came so powerfully into my mind without lifting up my hands and heart to heaven, in gratitude to God for having put such a thought into my heart.'

Two years after his retirement, the freedom of his native city was conferred on Raikes. There is no evidence that this honour was paid him in regard to his distinctive contribution to the world at large. As the editor of the county paper he had served the city with distinction, and this was what was acknowledged by presenting him with the freedom of Gloucester.

Just before this honour was paid him, an event occurred in London of much greater significance. Sunday schools had been steadily extending and increasing in the Metropolis, due largely to the material help offered on the

financial side, specially by the payment of teachers. The first Sunday school in London had been formed at Surrey Chapel, in South London, soon after that unique building had been put up for Rowland Hill. By 1803, a number of Sunday school teachers had started the excellent custom of meeting together from time to time for prayer and mutual encouragement. This united action proved so beneficial that some of the leading spirits decided to start a Sunday School *Union*, for extending the number of voluntary teachers in the schools and equipping them for their work.

This statesmanlike scheme is associated with the names of three men, W. B. Gurney (who achieved fame as a founder of a system of shorthand); James Nisbet, the publisher, and Thomas Thompson, of Bath. These three men called a meeting in Surrey Chapel on July 13th, when the Union was launched with much prayer and great enthusiasm. Although it was first intended to supplement the work of the Sunday School Society by the training of teachers and the publication of teachers' books and materials at reduced prices, the older Society was merged into the Union a few years later.

The maxim 'Union is strength' was soon demonstrated to be a sound one, and by 1810 Sunday School Unions had been formed with fruitful results at Nottingham, Sheffield, and other centres. In 1796 a Sabbath School Society (for evening Sunday schools) had been established, and in 1810 an Irish Society was launched at Dublin.

Chapter Ten

THE PASSING OF ROBERT RAIKES

THE declining years of Robert Raikes were crowned with peace and honour. In his home he had the joy of seeing his large family of sons and daughters settled happily in life.

Reminiscences of old people who were at one time servants in any home are likely to be quite candid; it is noteworthy that the memories collected by Josiah Harris from this source are uniformly happy. From them we get a picture of a quiet and well-ordered household, where the three domestics and the footman are properly cared for and kindly treated. To his servants, Raikes was ' always a very sociable and pleasant-spoken man.' He conducted family prayers every Sunday evening, at which the servants attended.

Young officers of both the army and navy were among the visitors, as became a household with a mistress who was the daughter of an admiral. It is clear that these young officers came with a purpose, for the eldest girl, Anne Raikes, eventually married Captain Thompson, commander of the *Leander* at the Battle of Trafalgar. In that famous sea-fight the captain lost an arm, but gained renown for bravery, being mentioned in Nelson's despatches. Raikes celebrated the victory of Trafalgar, and the

captain's part in it, by keeping ' open house ' for several days, during each of which seventy or eighty people were entertained with great festivity. The captain afterwards became a son-in-law, and Admiral Sir Thomas Thompson.

Mary Raikes, the second daughter, also married into the senior service, her husband becoming an admiral as well. The third daughter married an army officer, who became a lieut.-colonel of the Royal Westminsters. The fourth married a banker in London; the fifth, the commander of an East-India-man, and the youngest a captain of dragoons who attained the rank of general.

The eldest boy, named Robert Napier Raikes, was born on the very day that the Sunday school scheme was first promulgated in the columns of the *Gloucester Journal* (Nov. 3rd, 1783). He graduated at Cambridge and then entered the Church. He held livings at Gayton and Hillesden in Norfolk, and at Longhope in his native county, and proved himself a man of God of exemplary life. William Henley, the second son, adopted the profession of arms, and became a colonel in the Coldstream Guards.

Meanwhile, Raikes continued to be the magnet that drew people to Gloucester. Many were anxious to see the working of the Sunday schools that Raikes had himself started, and gain first-hand evidence as to the improvement made by them in the streets of Gloucester. That many of the schools were being carried on under difficult conditions and often in spite of the religious leaders, is plain from some of the

records that have been preserved of those pioneer days.

St. Michael's school at Gloucester was held up some steps on the New Inn premises, and all the attention paid to it by the Church was that Anthony Bretherton, a sexton, used to cane and bully the boys in a most brutal fashion. In some parishes the ruinous state of the church buildings rendered it impossible for the clergyman to provide proper accommodation for the Sunday classes. At Brockworth, four miles from Gloucester city, ' the parish church was in such a perilous state of dilapidation that the cracked walls were propped up with the boughs of elm trees. A school was therefore held in the cottage of a labourer named Richard Organ ; but the clergyman who was non-resident, persecuted Organ for his zeal, and, in scorn, called him a " Methodist." '

Yet from all kinds of hired rooms and cellars, from outhouses and barns, small processions of children issued every Sunday, and marched either to church or chapel, as the case might be, though often having no visible connection with either. The general and spontaneous attempts of private individuals to promote religious education among the masses in this way, is one of the most remarkable features in the early history of Sunday schools—none the less so because in many cases the bishops and clergy commended the Sunday school as a regenerative agency of unknown power. What is clear, in the evolution of the movement in its early stages, is that it depended on no great leader or

organiser for its growth. Any one who could read the Bible, and would take the trouble, might open a Sunday school, and take the scholars to whatever place of worship he or she belonged.

Nor had opposition to the movement died down. In the big industrial areas of the Midlands and the North, the schools were recognised as the first step in the education of the people. As such, the movement gathered opposition from those who felt that their only security and prosperity lay in keeping the vulgar in a state of complete ignorance.

'The instinct of self-preservation made the "quality" enemies of popular education. The clergy not taking an active part in their promotion were often opposed to Sunday schools because of the opportunities they afforded for the increase of nonconformity and the propagation of doctrines about the dignity and brotherhood of man, which were then regarded as heretical and unconstitutional. Many clergymen mixed up field preaching and heresy with Sunday schools, and were anxious to suppress dissent, field preaching and Sunday schools with one well-directed blow. The employers of labour, in the rural districts especially, opposed "book-learning" for the masses from fear that the rate of wages would advance; and in some districts, the people themselves were prompted to violent opposition because they were made to believe that their cherished amusements and vices were threatened. If they were to become "good" men, they feared there would be an

end to wrestling and cudgel-playing at fairs, to Sunday wakes and revels, to bull-baiting, cock-fighting, and tippling at ale-houses at all times. The Sunday School would be the means of taking all joyousness and colour out of life, which was already too sad-coloured and monotonous! The masses were induced to believe that efforts to improve them were founded on the sinister motive of "robbing" them of something.

'No more responsive chords could be played on in the hearts of the masses than freedom and parental rights. They would be free even in their vices; and however they neglected their offspring, they would not have their freedom to neglect them controlled. Children were their property—the only possession they had without disputed title; and the natural love for "possession," and tenacity in holding their own against all comers, prompted them to fight valiantly against the gentle promoters of Sunday Schools.

'That this fourfold opposition was real, widespread, and well-directed, is shown by the fact that the Pitt Cabinet seriously contemplated bringing in a bill for the suppression of field preaching and Sunday schools.

'These attacks were, however, in vain. The strength of the movement (humanly speaking) lay in the great and growing body of silent, unobtrusive workers who subscribed money, purchased and gave Bibles and Testaments, and visited the schools "to the great encouragement of those who laboured therein"; and who

refused to see any result but good in the better ordering of society.'*

No uniform development, or standard set of rules, can be traced in these formative years. On the contrary, the vitality of the movement appears to have been centred in freedom for the individual school to work out its own plan, according to its means and peculiar circumstances. All that such organisations as the Sunday School Society could do was to recommend general plans for the work, suggest certain necessary precautions, and help in the raising of the money to provide paid teachers, or cheap books to help the voluntary teacher.

For instance, we find the Secretary of the Sunday School Society recommending in 1807, that 'corporal punishment should be avoided as much as possible,' and that the schools should be open at all times to the inspection of the clergy. Fines instead of canings for various offences were provided for by the rules of the Baptist Sunday School, Tewkesbury, drawn up in 1809. It is probable that fines as a punishment for offences were common by that time, for corporal punishment in church and school was looked upon with disfavour at a very early date. By the Tewkesbury rules, children coming to school 'with dirty hands and face, and not having their hair combed; and for ill-behaviour in the meeting' were to forfeit one ticket or mark, entitling the holder to compete for a prize or treat; for lying and taking the name

*J. Henry Harris in 'The Story of the Sunday School' (published in 1901).

of the Lord in vain, two tickets and be reprimanded; for playing in the streets on the Lord's day, three tickets; for stealing, four tickets and be publicly reprimanded. A second offence rendered the culprit liable to expulsion. The first rule of this same school shows the catholicity of the early days of what was an interdenominational movement: 'This school shall consist of children of any denomination, from five years old and upwards; not excluding grown persons desirous of instruction.'

On the whole it was a good thing that Sunday schools developed apace on their own lines and under local leadership. Had it been otherwise, the passing of the veteran who had founded them might have proved a setback to their increase and strength.

In 1809 Raikes was cheered to learn that his plan for botanising in human nature had spread to Ireland. Thus he lived to see Sunday schools established throughout the United Kingdom. But his own work was now done. He was well past the 'three score years and ten' of man's allotted span, and during his length of days he had been blessed with good health, prosperity, and an exceptional share of influence. Towards the end of 1809 his health began to fail, but he was able to maintain his interest in his own Sunday school children during the following twelve months.

Early in 1811 he became very frail. At times he told the children who still came to see him in little groups that he would soon have to leave them.

On the 5th of April, he was sitting at his desk, reading quietly, when he suddenly collapsed. Loving hands carried the old man to his bed, but the physician that was called in declared that nothing could be done, and in little more than half an hour Robert Raikes had passed to his reward. Quietly the end of a useful life had come ; he met death with a sigh of peace.

Looking back from our point of vantage, and seeing what has resulted from Raikes's plan, we marvel that his death and funeral caused hardly any stir, and passed almost unnoticed in Gloucester itself. In the *Gloucester Journal* the announcement of his death was made in a brief and obscure obituary notice that has to be searched for.

' On Friday evening last, died suddenly at his house in this city, Robert Raikes, Esq., aged 75 ; who, in the year 1783, first instituted Sunday schools, and by his philanthropic exertions contributed to the adoption of them in different parts of the kingdom.'

When the day of burial came, no great gathering of people came to honour the memory of the man who had done so much for the children of England. Appropriately enough, however, those who gathered in greatest numbers were his Sunday school children. At the funeral no voice was raised in praise of the founder of Sunday schools, and no funeral sermon was preached in his honour. But the Sunday scholars he had loved, and who loved him, gathered on the lawn of his house for the funeral and sang hymns. In solemn dignity they walked in front

of the coffin through Crypt Alley to the church where he had worshipped. Robert Raikes was buried in his father's vault on the south side of the chancel, and the following words were added soon after to the inscription in Latin, as was customary at that period.

'Also of ROBERT, their eldest Son, by whom Sabbath Schools were first instituted in this place, and were also by his successful exertions and assiduity recommended to others.'

One curious feature of the funeral was typical of the man. Before the cortège left the house, the children who had assembled to show their affection for their teacher were surprised to receive a shilling and a plum cake, this being done at Raikes's own request in his will.

Chapter Eleven

THE WORK GOES ON

'GOD buries His workmen, but carries on His work.' Of no man could these words be more truly spoken than Robert Raikes, founder of the Sunday School movement. His death in 1811 brought no abatement in the vitality of the movement he had started so unostentatiously at Gloucester in 1780. On the contrary, the work swept forward, and for a time, at least, its founder seemed forgotten.

The fact that his passing attracted such little attention, and that no monument was then raised in his honour, would not have distressed this 'greatheart.' Other men, animated by his love for children and zeal for their Christian nurture, carried his work forward to new triumphs. In the year following his death, the first 'May meetings' of the Sunday School Union were held in the City of London Tavern in Bishopsgate Street, when an annual report was read and the business of the annual meeting transacted.

The jubilee of Sunday schools was celebrated in 1831 (a year after the actual date), but little interest was taken at the time in the founder of the movement. This jubilee served as a stock-taking that enables us to gauge the extent to which Raikes's plan had been adopted after fifty years. A Parliamentary return made at this date gave a total of 1,548,890 children in

attendance at Sunday schools, or nearly 11 per cent of the then population. Little imagination is needed to bring home to us the enormous achievement in half a century that is represented by this percentage. Apart from numbers, it was by this time realised that the spread of Sunday schools was the first real contribution towards popular education.

Moreover, the character of the work being done had by this time altered. No longer was Sunday school membership recruited from the dregs of the child population ; the scholars of 1830 were largely the children of the better-off lower classes. The teaching given was almost wholly of a religious nature, and gave results that could be more definitely gauged than in the early days. The thousands of teachers now required had to be drawn from the ranks of past scholars of the schools, and their work was, of course, entirely voluntary. This solved the financial problem of raising fees for teachers, that had been a drag on the progress of the movement in early days. But from this the situation developed a far more serious problem —the training and equipment of the voluntary teacher for his important Sunday school task.

We have already seen that the problem of teacher training had emerged within twenty years of Raikes's experiment, for one of the primary objects of launching the Sunday school Union in 1803, was to meet the need for helping the teacher in his work. Nor was it left to this Union of denominations to tackle the problem alone. In 1843, the Church of England Sunday

School Institute had been formed for improving the work in Church schools. The Wesleyan Methodists set up a Sunday School Department in 1874. Earlier than this, two significant offshoots from the movement had come into being—Ragged Schools were begun by John Pounds in 1819, and Bands of Hope appeared in 1847.

It was not till 1880, when the centenary of the Sunday school movement was celebrated, that Robert Raikes came into his own. The movement that looked to him as its head and founder had spread by this time to almost every part of the globe. Wherever English-speaking people were domiciled there the Sunday school, as the democratic instrument of popular Christian teaching, was well established. Truly Robert Raikes had 'builded better than he knew' when, under the Divine urge, he had determined to TRY his plan of botanising in human nature in 1780.

In a hundred years the Sunday school had become an integral part of the religious life of all Protestant countries, and the greatest instrument for the Christianising of the world in existence. Without discrediting the power of the Evangelical Revival, it can be claimed that the starting of Sunday schools saved the Church from extinction. For by providing a sphere of Christian service for the laity, and contributing 80 per cent of its members, the Sunday school made the Church vigorous and effective.

At the Sunday school centenary an attempt was made to do justice to the founder of the

movement, and to remedy the neglect of previous years. The city of Gloucester was visited by a number of distinguished hero-worshippers, as well as by many of the rank and file of the Sunday school army. The Earl of Shaftesbury, Lord Herschel, Mr. W. H. Smith, and Mr. Henry Cecil Raikes (the Postmaster General and a direct descendant of Robert Raikes), paid an official visit to Gloucester, and the Earl of Shaftesbury unveiled the model of a statue of Raikes that was to have been cut in Sicilian marble and placed in the cathedral.

But so far as Gloucester itself was concerned, the attempt to memorialise its most distinguished citizen had little abiding result. Someone suggested that ' the statue of Raikes, in wig and knee breeches, would not harmonise with the Gothic interior of the cathedral,' so the project came to nought. The offer of a stained glass window for the cathedral was at the time accepted by the dean and chapter, but when it was delivered all the suitable windows in the cathedral had been appropriated, so it had to be placed in the School of Art. The original tablet over the Raikes vault in St. Mary de Crypt Church, was subsequently removed to another position, so that to this day pilgrims from all parts of the world, who seek this mecca of Sunday schools, pass by the tomb of the founder in ignorance of the exact site.

But the real memorial to Robert Raikes, as revealed by the centenary celebrations, was seen in the records presented of the growth of the movement. Statistics presented by Mr. Foun-

tain J. Hartley, the honorary secretary of the Sunday School Union of that time, showed that there were over twelve million scholars in the Sunday schools of the world—one half of these being in the United States—while the teachers numbered nearly one and a half millions. Delegates attended the centenary from Sunday school centres in America, the British Colonies, the Continent of Europe, and the chief mission fields of the world. Before the convention dispersed, a statue of Raikes was unveiled by Lord Shaftesbury in the Embankment Gardens in London. The cost of this was met by the teachers and scholars in the Sunday schools affiliated to the Sunday School Union.

Nearly a quarter of a century later, another time of stocktaking for the movement was presented by the centenary celebrations of the Sunday School Union in London. Delegates from all parts of the world again assembled to strengthen and develop the work of Sunday schools. A commemorative meeting was held in the old Surrey Chapel (then, as now, a commercial warehouse) where the Union had been formed in 1803; but for the most part the problems of the training of teachers and improvement of Sunday school methods was the centre of attention.

Two names deserve particular mention in connection with the centenary. The first is that of F. F. Belsey (afterwards Sir Francis Belsey), who had done more for the Sunday School Union than any other man in his generation. The second is George Hamilton Archibald, a

Canadian, who, retiring from business in 1893, had graduated at Hartford School of Religious Pedagogy and, after lecturing in North America, had arrived in England in 1902. It is prophetic that he introduced the subject of child study at the centenary celebrations.

Under Belsey the Sunday School Union had developed in membership and activities to a degree beyond the dreams of Robert Raikes. The International Bible Reading Association, the Boys' and Girls' Life Brigades, and Seaside Convalescent Homes had started on their useful service. But the problem of teacher-training was as formidable as ever. By this time all the leading denominations had been aroused to the importance of the child, and Young People's Departments, with full-time secretaries, were at work.

With the appearance of Hamilton Archibald at the centenary a new era in Sunday school history was begun. The Rev. Carey Bonner, who had been appointed General Secretary of the Sunday School Union in 1900, was the first to realise the potentialities in this eager and gifted exponent of a new method of religious education. The Union at once appointed Hamilton Archibald as an Extension Lecturer, and sponsored his crusade to make psychology the hand-maid of Christian education. A national campaign was started that soon brought new life into countless Sunday schools, setting the teachers to study the child, and adapt their teaching and organisation to the scholars' needs at each stage of development. This crusade reached a culminating point in 1907 when a residential

college for the special training of Sunday school teachers was established at Westhill, Selly Oak, Birmingham, to serve all sections of the Free Churches.

During this period a similar movement had been taking place among the Sunday schools of the Church of England, inspired by the Rev. W. Hume Campbell, Secretary of the Church of England Sunday School Institute. Hume Campbell visited America, and was so impressed by the developments there in educational psychology that the need for the training of leaders on a big scale became very clear to him. He visited Westhill in 1908, and as a result of representations from Hamilton Archibald, that the Church of England ought to have a college of its own, St. Christopher's College for Church of England Sunday School teachers was opened at Blackheath in 1909.

The reform of teaching methods in the light of the proved results of child psychology had immediate effects on Sunday school lessons. In the very nature of things it sounded the deathknell of the International Lesson as a world scheme. The conception of a uniform Sunday school lesson of a truly International character was adumbrated about sixty years ago by American Sunday school leaders. The scheme aimed at getting Sunday school teachers throughout the world to study at the same time the same passage of Scripture, and give their classes the same lesson. On the surface, the idea seemed statesmanlike and satisfying to the imagination. In practice it broke down, how-

ever, because it was in essential conflict with the divine plan of child development. Children of the same age in various parts of the world differ enormously both in development and capacity—far too much so to make it possible to give an effective lesson from the same passage of Scripture to all children from eight years upwards in all countries. Attempts were made to overcome this defect by the grading of the method of presentation, but this proved quite inadequate in practice.

In the very nature of things, an International Lesson has generally meant the limiting of Sunday school teaching to elementary subjects. The Great War strikingly revealed the defects of the Sunday school teaching of the past. The majority of the men in the trenches of France and Flanders had passed through the Sunday school, and the chaplains reported, with almost wearisome monotony, that in their work they had to begin where the Sunday school teachers had left off in the past. The popular idea of 'gentle Jesus,' that has proved so inadequate to the needs of youth and manhood—albeit so pleasing to childhood—and the inaccuracy of the popular conception of what Christianity really is, can be traced to the limitations of the International Lesson idea. Other factors must be taken into account, of course, but no one can deny that the indifference of the masses to organised Christianity and the consequent decline in Church attendance and Sunday observance, must be partly due to defective Sunday school teaching in the past half century.

The International Lesson scheme had been drawn up since 1872 by a committee largely American, with a British section added in 1890. But an American reorganisation in 1916 led to a severance of all co-operation between the two continents, and since that date the British Lessons Council has provided a graded curriculum of Sunday school teaching that is being increasingly recognised as providing a progressive, comprehensive and well-balanced scheme of Christian education.

The completion of one hundred and fifty years' work of Sunday schools has synchronised with the retirement, crowned with honour, of the Rev. Carey Bonner as general secretary of what is now called the National Sunday School Union. His contribution to the movement has been a more permanent one than headquarters' secretary. His Ridley Lectures in 1910 on 'The Christ, the Child, and the Church' gave the campaign for a child-consciousness in the Church a new impetus along denominational lines, as well as through the strengthening of united effort through the Sunday School Union auxiliaries. We believe that the historian of Sunday schools, however, will record that Carey Bonner's greatest contribution has been through the introduction of the spirit of true worship and the enrichment of our hymnody. By his hymn books, and in countless other ways, he has set a new standard in Sunday school music, and has helped materially to make the school a house of worship as well as a seminary of Christian education.

Chapter Twelve

COMPLETING THE TASK

THE third jubilee of Sunday schools is being celebrated in this year of grace, and the picturesque figure of Robert Raikes will again be the cynosure of all eyes. It is well that honour should thus be paid to the indefatigable pioneer who, almost alone among his contemporaries, saw a way out from the depressing social evils of a dark day. But we must do more than applaud 'the man of Gloucester'—we need to understand his aim and motive and make the third jubilee the starting of a new campaign to carry them to greater success.

With Robert Raikes, all *social reform* began with the education of the child, and no plan has since been evolved superior to it. It can justly be claimed that Raikes is one of the fathers, if not founders, of popular education for the people,* and that all who labour for an educated democracy are carrying on Raikes's work. But Raikes was more than a social reformer; he was a deeply religious man, and his first Sunday schools aimed at providing a *Christian* education. In one of his editorials in the *Gloucester Journal*, we find this striking sentence: 'Religion must wait on improved education among the masses before we shall be able to

* 'The Sunday schools established by Mr. Raikes, of Gloucester, at the close of the century were the beginnings of popular education.'—J. R. GREEN's Short History of the People of England.

make much advance ; but religion and education may go together.'

Since he lived in rough old days, he had to begin with the teaching of reading, and to use corporal punishment, but these features were discarded at an early stage of the movement. Long before his death he was conducting a Sunday school of an entirely religious character, not far removed from the type of Sunday school that was almost universal thirty years ago.

Looking out at the world of his day, Raikes saw that some drastic measure was needed to stem the tide of evil, and conserve the basic elements of a Christian society. Beginning to reform the adult, he soon realised that such a task was hopeless ; so he focused his attention on educating the child. He thus discovered that ' the world marches forward on the feet of little children.'

In 1930, ' Robert Raikes's year,' leaders of Christian thought find themselves faced with a somewhat similar situation. The shadows of pessimism and unemployment—the results of the war—lie athwart our time ; the race for more armaments, and the problems of maintaining peace between the nations without and the classes within, press heavily on all. The growth of materialism, the provision of cheap transit, and the commercialising of recreation are destroying Sunday observance. A superficially educated democracy has little or no interest in, nor use for, organised Christianity. Yet, despite the work of Robert Raikes and his followers,

the churches are still devoting most of their energy and resources to work among adults. The situation at this third jubilee challenges us to return to the pioneer's plan of concentrating our hopes and efforts on educating the children of this generation in Christian doctrine and ethics. Raikes heard the divine call to TRY his great experiment of saving the children from the evil days ahead. The situation to-day constitutes a very clear call to every Sunday school worker to TRY, as Raikes did, to transform his own parish or district by teaching the children the way of Christ.

Following his Master, Raikes saw life as a whole, not in sacred and secular compartments. He interested himself, and indeed paid the expense of, the ordinary education of his scholars during the week. When necessary he fed the hungry and clothed the naked. In short, no part of child welfare was regarded by him as outside his active interest.

To-day the State has rightly assumed the responsibility of the education and physical care of the child, and helps him in adolescence in vocational and recreative directions. But what the State is doing would be much better done, and a great deal added to it, if those who are carrying on Raikes's work in the Sunday schools took a zealous and well-informed interest in these so-called 'secular' matters. Here is one practical way of commemorating Raikes's third jubilee. Let each Sunday school worker take a vital interest in the day school life of his scholars, help them in their play, guide them

in their choice of amusements and pilot them through the bewildering years of adolescence.

During this 'Raikes Year' let the middle wall of partition, that has too long separated the sacred from the secular, be entirely destroyed, so that whatever effects the life of the child is the direct concern of the Sunday school teacher. If the teachers in every locality took an intelligent and active interest in all local government matters that effect child-life, a vast improvement in the lot of the children would be seen in many places. Laws and bye-laws against the employment or exploitation of children could be enforced if public opinion were educated in such matters. Here is a field of enterprise much more worthy the admirers of Raikes than putting up statues and distributing medals.

As surely as Raikes's Sunday schools transformed the lives of the children of Gloucester, and even changed the appearance of the streets of that city on Sundays, so surely the lives of countless children of to-day would be transformed and improved if his admirers lived up to his example. Raikes was ahead of his time in his unshakeable faith in the power of Christianity to redeem character and elevate the lives of the people. In a day when the masses were despised, and regarded as incapable either of education or improvement, he persevered despite all failures in his plan of botanising in human nature.

In this Third Jubilee year, we have the same difficulties and discouragements to fight against and overcome. For although the form of evil

may have different features to-day, its force is the same as in 1780. It is better for us to catch Raikes's spirit of faith in the Gospel and in humanity, than to cheer laudatory speeches about his work in Gloucester.

Robert Raikes, dandy though he was, was not ashamed to face the smiles and sneers of people, and lead his ragged regiment through the streets into church. That act is symbolic of the work of Sunday schools during the last hundred and fifty years. Through the labours of a countless multitude of obscure and unknown teachers the school has been leading children into the Church ever since Raikes's day. The pity of it is that only about one in five of those who have passed through the school have hitherto found their way into the church. More can be done if teachers will pay the price by training themselves for this service.

At the Sunday School Union Centenary, 1903, Marion Lawrence, the great American Sunday school leader, declared that the best way to prevent our older boys from drifting away was to build a living wall of men between them and the door. In a very real sense the leakage from the Sunday school, which is most marked in the years of adolescence, can be traced to a lack of trained and consecrated men and women to hold the scholars to the school and lead them into the Church. The Third Jubilee year, therefore, ought to see a great recruiting of new teachers for the Sunday school, and a wide extension of all forms of teacher-training. No longer must there be any talk of

the church *and* the Sunday school, as though these are separate organisations. Too long has the much talked of gap between Church and school been an abyss, involving the loss of eighty per cent. of our scholars. Church and school must become one in reality, so that scholars will not be able to discover where the Sunday school leaves off and the Church begins. In other words, we must so develop the worship side of the Sunday school, and so simplify the teaching work of the Church, that both will meet and dovetail into each other in the Senior Department.

Conscious that something more than a school session was required for the Christian education of his children, Raikes made attendance at church an integral part of his plan of botanising in human nature. In recent years we have learned that it is more fruitful to combine teaching and worship in the Sunday school session, so that the atmosphere of worship shall hallow and influence the process of instruction. No better way could be found of celebrating the Third Jubilee in every Sunday school in the land than to reorganise the work so that in every case the Sunday school hour shall be full of the presence of God, and the scholars shall be engaged in His worship.

Raikes used stories, appealed to the eye, and adopted the method of question and answer in his Sunday school work. All these forms of teaching have been developed and improved in recent years, and it behoves all who would follow in his footsteps to master the best

educational methods, and so make their work really effective. Only thus shall we be able to hold our own against the more exacting conditions amid which we labour. This means a consistent effort on the part of all denominations to realise the ideal of every teacher a *trained* teacher.

If the children are to be led into the Church in ever-increasing numbers, the Church on her part must make the children welcome and provide for their needs. No longer must she hold herself aloof from the school, but set up the necessary organisation and machinery for training the adolescent scholars to become consecrated, efficient and active members. This can only be done by providing a scheme of graded Church membership where none exists, and holding classes for definite instruction in the meaning of the sacraments, the method of church government, and the privileges and duties of membership. There is scope here for every church in every town and village to celebrate the Raikes Third Jubilee by completing the task that the pioneer set himself one hundred and fifty years ago. Nothing short of winning the great concourse of children in our Sunday schools to Jesus Christ and His service will satisfy us. He alone is the Hope of the World and the Hope of the Sunday School Movement.

Spheres of service are open to-day to the Sunday school that Raikes never dreamed of in his day. By a carefully graded and comprehensive scheme of Christian education, we can, through the Sunday schools, 'create a new

mind and a new earth in a single generation,' to use Benjamin Kidd's pregnant phrase. By a progressive presentation of the life and character of Jesus Christ, suited to each well-defined stage of the child's development, we can sweep the present generation of Sunday scholars into the Kingdom of God—if we co-operate with the divine power and equip ourselves spiritually and educationally for this high task. By a wise use of Temperance teaching we can wipe out the social evils caused by the liquor traffic in a single generation. By a skilful presentation of the Christian ethic, we can abolish the sinister evils of betting and gambling. By training the rising generation in the principles of peace and world brotherhood we can banish the nightmare of war, throw off the burden of armaments, and make the League of Nations the sole arbiter in all disputes between nations, races and classes.

Here is a programme within reach of every Sunday school in every denomination, any part of which will do more to perfect the plan of Robert Raikes than torrents of eloquence in his praise, or the erecting of dozens of statues to perpetuate his memory. Personal tributes have their place in the Third Jubilee celebration, for it is seemly that we should 'praise great and famous men, and our fathers that begat us.' But let such celebrations be but the starting-place for renewed, reconsecrated and better-informed efforts towards completing the plan of Robert Raikes, that 'religion and education may go together.'

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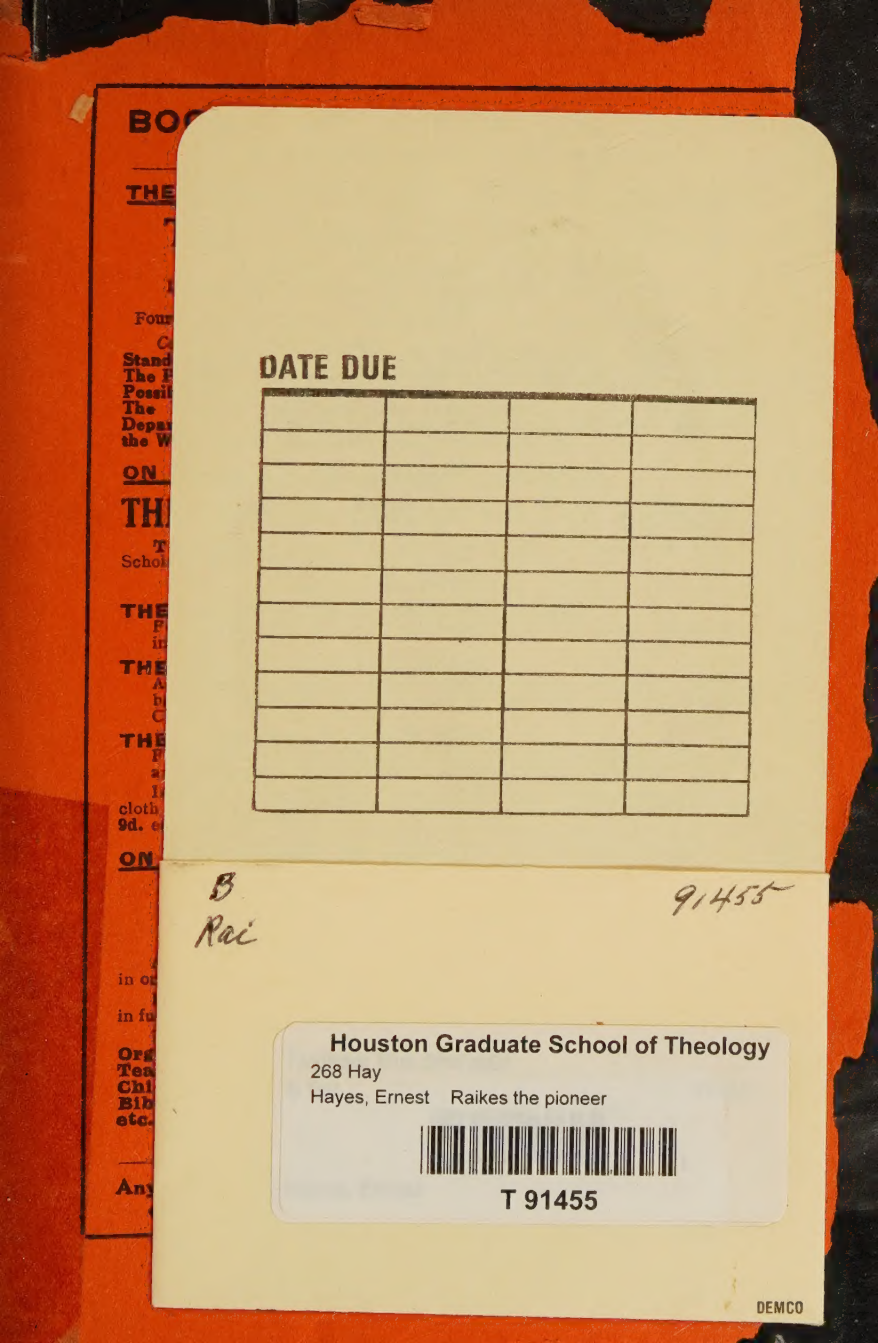
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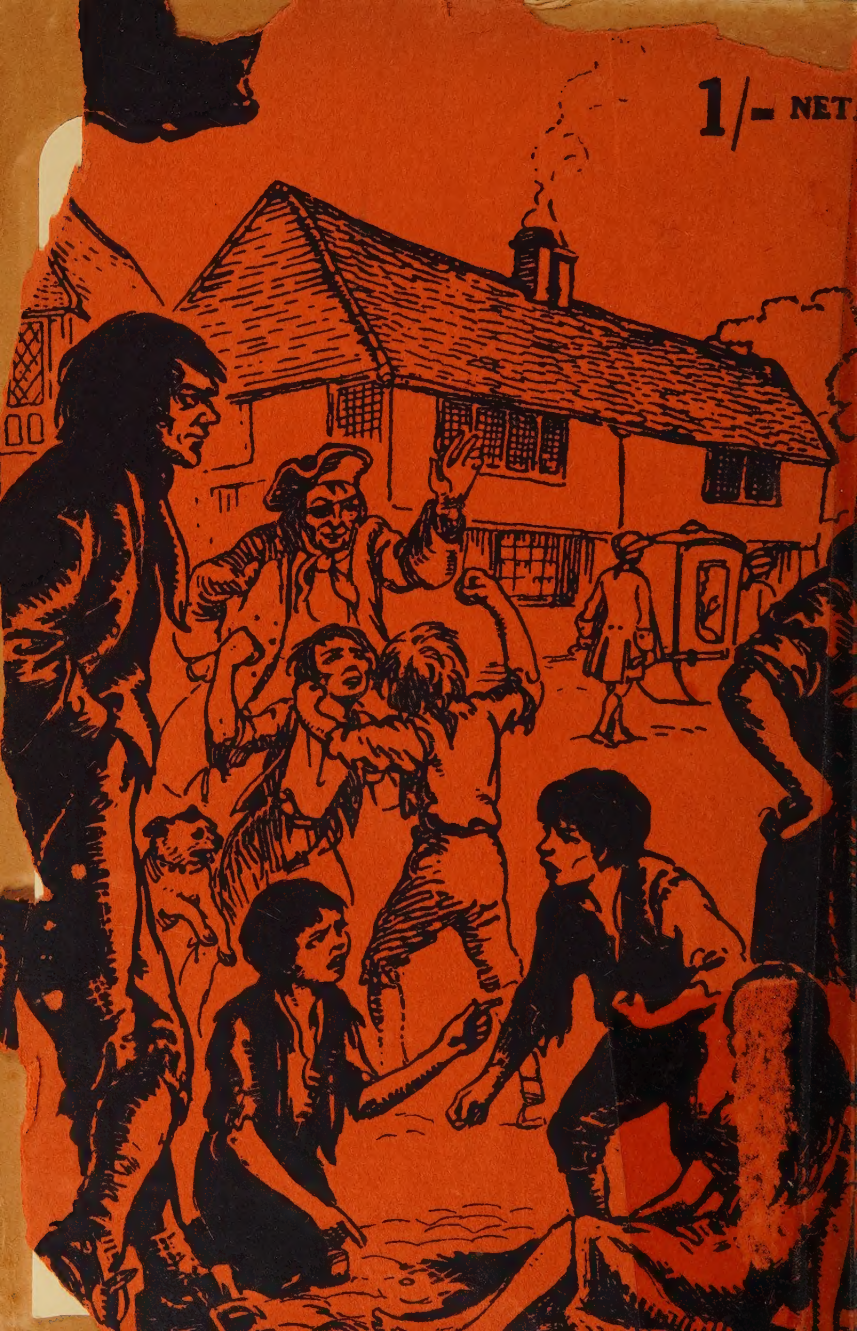
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